Critical Approaches to
AMERICAN LITERATURE

Volume II Walt Whitman to William Faulkner

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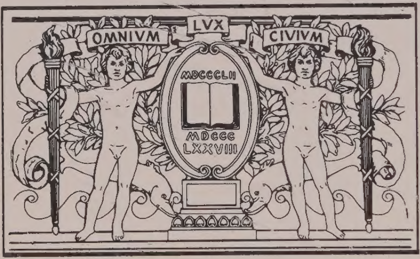
EDITED BY

Ray B. Browne & Martin Light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Critical Approaches TO *American Literature*

VOLUME II

Walt Whitman TO *William Faulkner*

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TO
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Walt Whitman TO *William Faulkner*

EDITED BY

Ray B. Browne & Martin Light

Purdue University

THOMAS · Y · CROWELL COMPANY

New York / Established 1834

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 65-22675

Designed by Guy Fleming

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

First Printing, October, 1965
Second Printing, June, 1967

PREFACE

THIS TWO-VOLUME COLLECTION OF READINGS is intended primarily to fill the need for critical perspectives that parallel and supplement the reading of basic texts in the survey course in American literature. We hope that it may also prove useful in more specialized courses in the field, and in American studies. As the reader will note, included here are not only essays on literature *per se*—both prose and poetry—but studies in American intellectual development and the history of ideas, as well.

The number of essays presented is large. This, we believe, achieves two goals: the "major" figures are given their full due, making this collection valuable for the study of those writers alone; yet the important "minor" figures are covered too. In treating the giants, we have selected studies of their most outstanding works, or of typical works. We include studies of many of the major works of Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Twain, and James, and of nearly all their other works that appear in the standard survey anthologies.

We have tried to choose outstanding essays, whether by critics of great or only modest reputation, with quality, pertinence, and recency of scholarship our chief criteria. We have turned to both articles and books, and we have sought in reproducing them to maintain the integrity of the originals. The articles appear in their entirety; the selections from books, in the few instances when they have required internal cutting, in no way depart from the intent of their authors. To make the volumes as useful as possible, we include a bibliography at the end of each: first a listing, necessarily limited, of several general books the student may profitably familiarize himself with, and next, grouped by author, lists of books and articles about the several figures represented in the volume. In selecting entries for each author grouping, we have tried to include at least one biographical and critical book, and articles that cover, insofar as possible, the most important works and aspects of the writer.

Thus, in the two volumes, we present a range of critical approaches to the entire period of American literature. We hope that as he is introduced to these perspectives, the student may find his own critical abilities stimulated—and his experience and enjoyment of that literature deepened.

In the preparation of these volumes, we greatly appreciate the cooperation of our families: for Volume I, the wholehearted and selfless help of Olwyn Orde Browne and the sometimes unwitting aid of Glenn, Kevin, and Rowan; for Volume II, and the proofreading of both volumes, the assistance of Dorothy Light, and the goodwill of Judith, Betsy, and Kate.

R. B. B.
M. L.

Lafayette, Indiana
September 1965

CONTENTS

WALT WHITMAN

R. W. B. Lewis, *The New Adam: Whitman* 1
Randall Jarrell, *Some Lines from Whitman* 14
Richard P. Adams, *Whitman's "Lilacs" and the Tradition of Pastoral Elegy* 28
Paul Fussell, Jr., *Whitman's Curious Warble: Reminiscence and Reconciliation* 37

EMILY DICKINSON

Allen Tate, *Emily Dickinson* 54

MARK TWAIN

John C. Gerber, *The Relation between Point of View and Style in the Works of Mark Twain* 68
Leo Marx, *Mr. Eliot, Mr. Trilling, and* Huckleberry Finn 82
Ray B. Browne, *Huck's Final Triumph* 97
Clinton S. Burhans, Jr., *The Sober Affirmation of Mark Twain's Hadleyburg* 109

HENRY JAMES

J. A. Ward, *Henry James and the Nature of Evil* 119
Christof Wegelin, *The American as a Young Lady* 125
Joseph Warren Beach, *Point of View* 145
Earle G. Labor, *James's "The Real Thing": Three Levels of Meaning* 156

Walter F. Wright, *The Quest for Reality* [*in "The Beast in the Jungle"*] 159

STEPHEN CRANE

Ray B. West, Jr., *Stephen Crane: Author in Transition* 166

THEODORE DREISER

Charles Child Walcutt, *Theodore Dreiser and the Divided Stream* 179

ROBERT FROST

William Van O'Connor, *Robert Frost: Profane Optimist* 198

EZRA POUND

M. L. Rosenthal, *The* Mauberley *Sequence* 214

T. S. ELIOT

F. O. Matthiessen, *The 'Objective Correlative'* 224
F. R. Leavis, *T. S. Eliot:* The Waste Land 236

WALLACE STEVENS

Richard Gustafson, *The Practick of the Maker in Wallace Stevens* 249

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Leslie Fiedler, *Some Notes on F. Scott Fitzgerald* 258
Thomas A. Hanzo, *The Theme and the Narrator of* The Great Gatsby 266

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Philip Young, *The Hero and the Code* 275
Mark Spilka, *The Death of Love in* The Sun Also Rises 291

WILLIAM FAULKNER

Olga W. Vickery, *William Faulkner and the Figure in the Carpet* 304
Melvin Backman, *The Wilderness and the Negro in Faulkner's "The Bear"* 320

BIBLIOGRAPHY 331

Walt Whitman

The New Adam: Whitman

R. W. B. Lewis

Whitman appears as the Adamic man reborn here in the 19th century.

JOHN BURROUGHS (1896)

IN HIS OLD AGE, Dr. Holmes derived a certain amount of polite amusement from the poetry of Walt Whitman. Whitman, Holmes remarked, "carried the principle of republicanism through the whole world of created objects"; he smuggled into his "hospitable vocabulary words which no English dictionary recognizes as belonging to the language —words which will be looked for in vain outside of his own pages." Holmes found it hard to be sympathetic toward *Leaves of Grass;* it seemed to him windy, diffuse, and humorless; but his perceptions were as lively as ever. In these two observations he points to the important elements in Whitman which are central here: the spirit of equality which animated the surging catalogues of persons and things (on its more earthy level, not unlike Emerson's lists of poets and philosophers, with their equalizing and almost leveling tendency); the groping after novel

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words to identify novel experiences; the lust for inventiveness which motivated what was for Whitman the great act, the creative act.

Holmes's tone of voice, of course, added that for him Whitman had gone too far; Whitman was too original, too republican, too entire an Adam. Whitman had indeed gone further than Holmes: a crucial and dimensional step further, as Holmes had gone further than Channing or Norton. In an age when the phrase "forward-looking" was a commonplace, individuals rarely nerved themselves to withstand the shock of others looking and moving even further forward than they. Emerson himself, who had gone so far that the liberal Harvard Divinity School forbade his presence there for more than thirty years, shared some of Holmes's feeling about Whitman. When his cordial letter welcoming *Leaves of Grass* in 1855 was published in the *New York Tribune*, Emerson muttered in some dismay that had he intended it for publication, he "should have enlarged the *but* very much—enlarged the *but*." *Leaves of Grass* "was pitched in the very highest key of self-reliance," as a friend of its author maintained; but Emerson, who had given that phrase its contemporary resonance, believed that any attitude raised to its highest pitch tended to encroach dangerously on the truth of its opposite.

It would be no less accurate to say that Walt Whitman, instead of going too far forward, had gone too far backward: for he did go back, all the way back, to a primitive Adamic condition, to the beginning of time.

In the poetry of Walt Whitman, the hopes which had until now expressed themselves in terms of progress crystallized all at once in a complete recovery of the primal perfection. In the early poems Whitman accomplished the epochal return by huge and almost unconscious leaps. In later poems he worked his way more painstakingly up the river of history to its source: as, for example, in "Passage to India," where the poet moves back from the recently constructed Suez Canal, back past Christopher Columbus, past Alexander the Great and the most ancient of heroes and peoples, to the very "secret of the earth and sky." "In the beginning," John Locke once wrote, "all the world was America." Whitman manages to make us feel what it might have been like; and he succeeds at last in presenting the dream of the new Adam—along with his sorrows.

A measure of Whitman's achievement is the special difficulty which that dream had provided for others who tried to recount it. Its character was such that it was more readily described by those who did not wholly share in it. How can absolute novelty be communicated? All the history of the philosophy of language is involved with that question, from *The Cratylus* of Plato to the latest essay on semantics; and one could bring to bear on it the variety of anecdotes about Adam's naming the animals by the disturbingly simple device of calling a toad a toad.

Hawthorne conveyed the idea of novelty by setting it in an ancient pattern: allowing it thereby exactly to be *recognized;* and reaching a sharpness of meaning also to be found in Tocqueville's running dialectic of democracies and aristocracies. Whitman employed the same tactic when he said of Coleridge that he was "like Adam in Paradise, and just as free from artificiality." This was a more apt description of himself, as he knew:

I, chanter of Adamic songs,
Through the new garden the West,
  the great cities calling.

It is, in fact, in the poems gathered under the title *Children of Adam* (1860) that we have the most explicit evidence of his ambition to reach behind tradition to find and assert nature untroubled by art, to re-establish the natural unfallen man in the living hour. Unfallen man is, properly enough, unclothed as well; the convention of cover came in with the Fall; and Whitman adds his own unnostalgic sincerity to the Romantic affection for nakedness:

As Adam, early in the morning,
Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep,
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body
  as I pass,
Be not afraid of my body.

For Whitman, as for Holmes and Thoreau, the quickest way of framing his novel outlook was by lowering, and secularizing, the familiar spiritual phrases: less impudently than Thoreau but more earnestly, and indeed more monotonously, but with the same intention of salvaging the human from the religious vocabulary to which (he felt) it had given rise. Many of Whitman's poetic statements are conversions of religious allusion: the new miracles were acts of the senses (an odd foreshortening, incidentally, of Edwards' Calvinist elaboration of the Lockian psychology); the aroma of the body was "finer than prayer"; his head was "more than churches, bibles and all creeds." "If I worship one thing more than another," Whitman declaimed, in a moment of Adamic narcissism, "it shall be the spread of my own body." These assertions gave a peculiar stress to Whitman's seconding of the hopeful belief in men like gods: "Divine am I, inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch." Whitman's poetry is at every moment an act of turbulent incarnation.

But although there is, as there was meant to be, a kind of shock-value in such lines, they are not the most authentic index to his pervasive Adamism, because in them the symbols have become too explicit and so fail to work symbolically. Whitman in these instances is stating his position and contemplating it; he is betraying his own principle of indirect statement; he is telling us too much, and the more he tells us, the more we seem to detect the anxious, inflated utterance of a charlatan. We cling to our own integrity and will not be thundered at. We respond far less willingly to Whitman's frontal assaults than we do to his dramatizations; when he is enacting his role rather than insisting on it, we are open to persuasion. And he had been enacting it from the outset of *Leaves of Grass*.

This is the true nature of his achievement and the source of his claim to be the representative poet of the party of Hope. For the "self" in the very earliest of Whitman's poems is an individual who is always moving forward. To say so is not merely to repeat that Whitman believed in progress; indeed, it is in some sense to deny it. The young Whitman, at least, was not an apostle of progress in its customary meaning of a motion from worse to better to best, an improvement over a previous historic condition, a "rise of man." For Whitman, there was no past or "worse" to progress from; he moved forward because it was the only direction (he makes us think) in which he could move; because there was nothing behind him—or if there were, he had not yet noticed it. There is scarcely a poem of Whitman's before, say, 1867, which does not have the air of being the first poem ever written, the first formulation in language of the nature of persons and of things and of the relations between them; and the urgency of the language suggests that it was formulated in the very nick of time, to give the objects described their first substantial existence.

Nor is there, in *Leaves of Grass*, any complaint about the weight or intrusion of the past; in Whitman's view the past had been so effectively burned away that it had, for every practical purpose, been forgotten altogether. In his own recurring figure, the past was already a corpse; it was on its way out the door to the cemetery; Whitman watched it absent-mindedly, and turned at once to the living reality. He did enjoy, as he reminds us, reciting Homer while walking beside the ocean; but this was just because Homer was exempt from tradition and talking at and about the dawn of time. Homer was the poet you found if you went back far enough; and as for the sea, it had (unlike Melville's) no sharks in it—no ancient, lurking, indestructible evil powers. Whitman's hope was unspoiled by memory. When he became angry, as he did in *Democratic Vistas* (1871), he was not attacking his generation in the Holgrave manner for continuing to accept the old and the foreign, but for fumbling its extraordinary opportunity, for taking a wrong turn on the bright new highway he had mapped for it. Most of the time he was more interested in the map, and we are more interested in him when he was.

It was then that he caught up and set to music the large contemporary conviction that man had been born anew in the new society, that the race was off to a fresh start in America. It was in *Leaves of Grass* that the optative mood, which had endured for over a quarter of a century and had expressed itself so variously and so frequently, seemed to have been transformed at last into the indicative. It was there that the hope that had enlivened spokesmen from Noah Webster in 1825 ("American glory begins at the dawn") to the well-named periodical, *Spirit of the Age* in 1849 ("The accumulated atmosphere of ages, containing stale ideas and opinions . . . will soon be among the things that were")—that all that stored-up abundance of hope found its full poetic realization. *Leaves of Grass* was a climax as well as a beginning, or rather, it was the climax of a long effort to begin.

This was why Emerson, with whatever enlarged "buts" in his mind, made a point of visiting Whitman in New York and Boston; why Thoreau, refusing to be put off "by any brag or egoism in his book," preferred Whitman to Bronson Alcott; and why Whitman, to the steady surprise of his countrymen, has been regarded in Europe for almost a century as unquestionably the greatest poet the New World has produced: an estimate which even Henry James would come round to. European readers were not slow to recognize in Whitman an authentic rendering of their own fondest hopes; for if much of his vision had been originally imported from Germany and France, it had plainly lost its portion of nostalgia en route. While European romanticism continued to resent the effect of time, Whitman was announcing that time had only just begun. He was able to think so because of the facts of immediate history in America during the years when he was maturing: when a world was, in some literal way, being created before his eyes. It was this that Whitman had the opportunity to dramatize; and it was this that gave *Leaves of Grass* its special quality of a Yankee Genesis: a new account of the creation of the world—the creation, that is, of a new world; an account this time with a happy ending for Adam its hero; or better yet, with no ending at all; and with this important emendation, that now the creature has taken on the role of creator.

It was a twofold achievement, and the second half of it was demanded by the first. We see the sequence, for example, in the development from section 4 to section 5 of "Song of Myself." The first phase was the identification of self, an act which proceeded by distinction and differentiation, separating the self from every element that in a traditional view might be supposed to be part of it: Whitman's identity card had no space on it for the names of his ancestry. The exalted mind which carried with it a conviction of absolute novelty has been described by Whitman's friend, the Canadian psychologist, Dr. R. M. Bucke, who relates it to what he calls Whitman's "cosmic consciousness." "Along with the consciousness of the cosmos [Dr. Bucke wrote], there occurs an intellectual enlightenment which alone would place the individual on a new plane of existence—would make him almost a member of a new species." *Almost a member of a new species:* that could pass as the slogan of each individual in the party of Hope. It was a robust American effort to make real and operative the condition which John Donne once had merely feared:

> Prince, Subject, Father, Son are things forgot,
> For every man alone thinks he has got
> To be a Phoenix and that then can be
> None of that kind, of which he is, but he.

Whitman achieves the freedom of the new condition by scrupulously peeling off every possible source of, or influence upon, the "Me myself," the "what I am." As in section 4 of "Song of Myself":

> Trippers and askers surround me
> People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life, or the
> ward and the city I live in or the nation. . . .
> The sickness of one of my folks, or of myself, or the ill-
> doing or loss or lack of money, or depressions or
> exaltations,
> Battles, the horror of fratricidal wars, the fever of doubtful
> news, the fitful events,
> These come to me days and nights and go from me again,
> But they are not the Me myself.
> Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am;
> Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary;

> Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable certain rest,
> Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,
> Both in and out of the game, and watching and wondering at it.

There is Emerson's individual, the "infinitely repellent orb." There is also the heroic product of romanticism, exposing behind the mass of what were regarded as inherited or external or imposed and hence superficial and accidental qualities the true indestructible secret core of personality. There is the man who contends that "nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self."

There, in fact, is the new Adam. If we want a profile of him, we could start with the adjectives Whitman supplies: amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary; especially unitary, and certainly very easily amused; too complacent, we frequently feel, but always compassionate—expressing the old divine compassion for every sparrow that falls, every criminal and prostitute and hopeless invalid, every victim of violence or misfortune. With Whitman's help we could pile up further attributes, and the exhaustive portrait of Adam would be composed of a careful gloss on each one of them: hankering, gross, mystical, nude; turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking, and breeding; no sentimentalist, no stander above men and women; no more modest than immodest; wearing his hat as he pleases indoors and out; never skulking or ducking or deprecating; adoring himself and adoring his comrades; afoot with his vision,

> Moving forward then and now and forever,
> Gathering and showing more always and with velocity,
> Infinite and omnigenous.

And announcing himself in language like that. For an actual illustration, we could not find anything better than a stylized daguerrotype of himself which Whitman placed as the Frontispiece of the first edition. We recognize him at once: looking with side-curved head, bending an arm on the certain rest of his hip, evidently amused, complacent, and curious; bearded, rough, probably sensual; with his hat on.

Whitman did resemble this Adamic archetype, according to his friend John Burroughs. "There was a look about him," Burroughs remembered, "hard to describe, and which I have seen in no other face,—a gray, brooding, elemental look, like the granite rock, something primitive and Adamic that might have belonged to the first man." The two new adjectives there are "gray" and "brooding"; and they belong to the profile, too, both of Whitman and of the character he dramatized. There was bound to be some measure of speculative sadness inherent in the situation. Not all the leaves Whitman uttered were joyous ones, though he wanted them all to be and was never clear why they were not. His ideal image of himself—and it is his best single trope for the new Adam—was that of a live oak he saw growing in Louisiana:

> All alone stood it and the mosses hung down from the branches,
> Without any companion it grew there uttering joyous leaves of dark green,
> And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of myself.

But at his most honest, he admitted, as he does here, that the condition was somehow unbearable:

> I wondered how it could utter joyous leaves standing alone there without a friend near, for I knew I could not. . . .
> And though the live-oak glistens there in Louisiana solitary in a wide flat space,
> Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a friend a lover near,
> I knew very well I could not.

Adam had his moments of sorrow also. But the emotion had nothing to do with the tragic insight; it did not spring from any perception of a genuine hostility in nature or lead to the drama of colliding forces. Whitman was wistful, not tragic. We might almost say that he was wistful because he was not tragic. He was innocence personified. It is not difficult to marshal a vast array of references to the ugly, the gory, and the sordid in his verses; brought together in one horrid lump, they appear as the expression of one who was well informed about the shabby side of the world; but though he offered himself as "the poet of wickedness" and claimed to be "he who knew what it was to be evil," every item he introduced as vile turns out, after all, to be merely a particular beauty of a different original coloration. "Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand indifferent." A sentiment like that can make sense only if the term "evil" has been filtered through a transfiguring moral imagination, changing in essence as it passes.

That sentiment, of course, is not less an expression of poetic than of moral motivation. As a statement of the poetic sensibility, it could have been uttered as easily by Shakespeare or Dante as by Whitman. Many of the very greatest writers suggest, as Whitman does, a peculiar artistic innocence, a preadolescent wonder which permits such a poet to take in and reproject whatever there is, shrinking from none of it. But in Whitman, artistic innocence merged with moral innocence: a preadolescent ignorance of the convulsive undertow of human behavior—something not at all shared by Dante or Shakespeare. Both modes of innocence are present in the poetry of Walt Whitman, and they are not at any time to be really distinguished. One can talk about his image of moral innocence only in terms of his poetic creation.

"I reject none, accept all, then reproduce all in my own forms." The whole spirit of Whitman is in the line: there is his strategy for overcoming his sadness, and the second large phase of his achievement, following the act of differentiation and self-identification. It is the creative phase, in that sense of creativity which beguiles the artist most perilously into stretching his analogy with God—when he brings a world into being. Every great poet composes a world for us, and what James called the "figure in the carpet" is the poet's private chart of that world; but when we speak of the poet's world—of Dostoevski's or Balzac's—we knowingly skip a phrase, since what we mean is Dostoevski's (or Balzac's) selective embodiment of an already existing world. In the case of Whitman, the type of extreme Adamic romantic, the metaphor gains its power from a proximity to the literal, as though Whitman really were engaged in the stupendous task of building a world that had not been there before the first words of his poem.

The task was self-imposed, for Whitman's dominant emotion, when it was not unmodified joy, was simple, elemental loneliness; it was a testimony to his success and contributed to his peculiar glow. For if the hero of *Leaves of Grass* radiates a kind of primal innocence in an innocent world, it was not only because he had made that world, it was also because he had begun by making himself. Whitman is an early example, and perhaps the most striking one we have, of the self-made man, with an undeniable grandeur which is the product of his manifiest sense of having been responsible for his own being—something far more compelling than the more vulgar version of the rugged individual who claims responsibility only for his own bank account.

And of course he was lonely, incomparably lonely; no anchorite was ever so lonely, since no anchorite was ever so alone. Whitman's image of the evergreen, "solitary in a wide, flat space . . . without a friend a lover near," introduced what more and more appears to be the central theme of American literature, in so far as a unique theme may be claimed for it: the theme of loneliness, dramatized in what I shall later describe as the story of *the hero in space*. The only recourse for a poet like Whitman was to fill the space by erecting a home and populating it with companions and lovers.

Whitman began in an Adamic condition which was only too effectively realized: the isolated individual, standing flush with the empty universe, a primitive moral and intellectual entity. In the behavior of a "noiseless, patient spider," Whitman found a revealing analogy:

> A noiseless, patient spider
> I mark'd, where, on a little promontory, it stood out,
>   isolated,
> Mark'd how, to explore the vacant, vast surrounding,
> It launched forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
> Ever unreeling them—ever tirelessly speeding them.

"Out of itself." This is the reverse of the traditionalist attitude that, in Eliot's phrase, "home is where one starts from." Whitman acted on the hopeful conviction that the new Adam started from himself; having created himself, he must next create a home. The given in individual experience was no longer a complex of human, racial, and familial relationships; it was a self in a vacant, vast surrounding. Each simple separate person must forge his own framework anew. This was the bold, enormous venture inevitably confronted by the Adamic personality. He had to become the maker of his own conditions—if he were to have any conditions or any achieved personality at all.

There were, in any case, no conditions to *go back to*—to take upon one's self or to embody. There is in fact almost no indication at all in *Leaves of Grass* of a return or reversion, even of that recovery of childhood detected in *Walden*. Whitman begins after that recovery, as a child, seemingly self-propagated, and he is always going *forth;* one of his pleasantest poems was constructed around that figure. There is only the open road, and Whitman moves forward from the start of it. Homecoming is for the exile, the prodigal son, Adam after the expulsion, not for the new unfallen Adam in the western garden. Not even in "Passage to India" is there a note of exile, because there is no sense of sin ("Let others weep for sin"). Whitman was entirely remote from the view of man as an orphan which motivated many of the stories of Hawthorne and Melville and which underlay the characteristic adventure they narrated of the search for a father. Hawthorne, an orphan himself and the author of a book about England called *Our Old Home*, sometimes sent his heroes to Europe to look for their families; Melville dispatched his heroes to the bottom of the sea on the same mission. This was the old way of posing the problem: the way of mastering life by the recovery of home, though it might require descent to the land of the dead; but Whitman knew the secret of his paternity.

Whitman was creating a world, even though he often sounds as though he were saluting a world that had been lying in wait for him: "Salut au monde." In one sense, he is doing just that, welcoming it, acknowledging it, reveling in its splendor and variety. His typical condition is one of acceptance and absorption; the word which almost everyone who knew him applied to his distinguishing capacity was "absorptive." He absorbed life for years; and when he contained enough, he let it go out from him again. "I . . . accept all, then reproduce all in my own forms." He takes unflagging delight in the reproductions: "Me pleased," he says in "Our Old Feuillage"; it is the "what I am." But the pleasure of seeing becomes actual only in the process of naming. It is hard to recall any particular of life and work, of men and women and animals and plants and things, of body and mind, that Whitman has not somewhere named in caressing detail. And the process of naming is for Whitman nothing less than the process of creation. This new Adam is both maker and namer; his innocent pleasure, untouched by humility, is colored by the pride of one who looks on his work and finds it good. The things that are named seem to spring into being at the sound of the word. It was through the poetic act that Whitman articulated the dominant metaphysical illusion of his day and became the creator of his own world.

We have become familiar, a century after the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, with the notion of the poet as the magician who "orders reality" by his use of language. That notion derived originally from the epochal change—wrought chiefly by Kant and Hegel—in the relation between the human mind and the external world; a change whereby the mind "thought order into" the sensuous mass outside it instead of detecting an order externally existing. Whitman (who read Hegel and who wrote a singularly flatulent poetic reflection after doing so) adapted that principle to artistic creativity with a vigor and enthusiasm unknown before James Joyce and his associates in the twentieth century. What is implicit in every line of Whitman is the belief that the poet *projects* a world of order and meaning and identity into either a chaos or a sheer vacuum; he does not *discover* it. The poet may salute the chaos; but he creates the world.

Such a conviction contributed greatly to Whitman's ever enlarging idea of the poet as the vicar of God, as the son of God—as God himself. Those were not new labels for the artist, but they had been given fresh currency in Whitman's generation; and Whitman held to all of them more ingenuously than any other poet who ever lived. He supervised the departure of "the priests" and the arrival of the new vicar, "the divine litteratus"; he erected what he called his novel "trinitas" on the base of "the true son of God, the poet"; he offered himself as a cheerful, divine scapegoat and stage-managed "my own crucifixion." And to the extent that he fulfilled his own demands for *the* poet—as laid down in the preface to *Leaves of Grass* and in *Democratic Vistas*—Whitman became God the Creator.

This was the mystical side of him, the side which announced itself in the fifth section of "Song of Myself," and which led to the mystical vision of a newly created totality. The vision emerges from those lyrical sweeps through the universe in the later sections of the poem: the sections in which Whitman populated and gave richness and shape to the universe by the gift of a million names. We can round out our picture of Whitman as Adam—both Adam as innocent and Adam as namer—if we distinguish his own brand of mysticism from the traditional variety. Traditional mysticism proceeds by denial and negation and culminates in the imagery of deserts and silence, where the voice and the being of God are the whole of reality. Whitman's mysticism proceeds by expansive affirmation and culminates in plenitude and huge volumes of noise. Traditional mysticism is the surrender of the ego to its creator, in an eventual escape from the limits of names; Whitman's is the expansion of the ego in the act of creation itself, naming every conceivable object as it comes from the womb.

The latter figure is justified by the very numerous references, both by Whitman and by his friends, to his "great mother-nature." We must cope with the remarkable blend in the man, whereby this Adam, who had already grown to the stature of his own maker, was not less and at the same time his own Eve, breeding the human race out of his love affair with himself. If section 5 of "Song of Myself" means anything, it means this: a miraculous intercourse between "you my soul" and "the other I am," with a world as its offspring. How the process worked in his poems can be seen by examining any one of the best of them. There Whitman skilfully brings into being the small world of the particular poem by introducing a few items one by one, linking them together by a variety of devices, running back over them time and again to reinsure their solidity and durability, adding further items and quickly forging the relations between them and the cluster already present, announcing at the end the accomplished whole and breathing over all of it the magical command *to be*.

Take, for example, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry":

> Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!
> Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you also face to face.
> Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how curious you are to me!
> On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning home, are more curious to me than you suppose,
> And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose.

This is not the song of a *trovatore*, a finder, exposing bit by bit the substance of a spectacle which is there before a spectator looks at it. It is the song of a poet who creates his spectacle by "projecting" it as he goes along. The flood tides, the clouds, the sun, the crowds of men and women in the usual costumes: these exist in the instant they are named and as they are pulled in toward one another, bound together by a single unifying eye through the phrases which apply to them severally ("face to face," "curious to me"). The growth of the world is exactly indicated in the increasing length of the lines; until, in the following stanza, Whitman can observe a "simple, compact, well-join'd scheme." Stabilized in space, the scheme must now be given stabilizing relations in time; Whitman goes on to announce that "fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour high" (the phrase had to be repeated) "a hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them." With the world, so to speak, a going concern, Whitman is able now to summon new elements into existence: sea gulls, the sunlight in the water, the haze on the hills, the schooners and sloops and ships at anchor, the large and small steamers, and the flags of all nations. A few of the conspicuous elements are blessed and praised, in an announcement (stanza 8) not only of their existence but now rather of the value they impart to one another; and then, in the uninterrupted prayer of the final stanza (stanza 9—the process covers nine stanzas, as though it were nine months) each separate entity is named again as receiving everlasting life through its participation in the whole:

> Flow on river! flow with the flood-tide, and
> ebb with the ebb-tide!
> Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!

And so on: until the mystery of incarnation has been completed.

Some Lines from Whitman

RANDALL JARRELL

WHITMAN, DICKINSON, AND MELVILLE seem to me the best poets of the 19th Century here in America. Melville's poetry has been grotesquely underestimated, but of course it is only in the last four or five years that it has been much read; in the long run, in spite of the awkwardness and amateurishness of so much of it, it will surely be thought well of. (In the short run it will probably be thought entirely too well of. Melville is a great poet only in the prose of *Moby Dick.*) Dickinson's poetry has been thoroughly read, and well though undifferentiatingly loved—after a few decades or centuries almost everybody will be able to see through Dickinson to her poems. But something odd has happened to the living changing part of Whitman's reputation: nowadays it is people who are not particularly interested in poetry, people who say that they read a poem for what it says, not for how it says it, who admire Whitman most. Whitman is often written about, either approvingly or disapprovingly, as if he were the Thomas Wolfe of 19th Century democracy, the hero of a de Mille movie about Walt Whitman. (People even talk about a war in which Walt Whitman and Henry James chose up sides, to begin with, and in which you and I will go on fighting till the day we die.) All this sort of thing, and all the bad poetry that there of course is in Whitman—for any poet has written

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enough bad poetry to scare away anybody—has helped to scare away from Whitman most "serious readers of modern poetry." They do not talk of his poems, as a rule, with any real liking or knowledge. Serious readers, people who are ashamed of not knowing all Hopkins by heart, are not at all ashamed to say, "I don't really know Whitman very well." This may harm Whitman in your eyes, they know, but that is a chance that poets have to take. Yet "their" Hopkins, that good critic and great poet, wrote about Whitman, after seeing five or six of his poems in a newspaper review: "I may as well say what I should not otherwise have said, that I always knew in my heart Walt Whitman's mind to be more like my own than any other man's living. As he is a very great scoundrel this is not a very pleasant confession." And Henry James, the leader of "their" side in that awful imaginary war of which I spoke, once read Whitman to Edith Wharton (much as Mozart used to imitate, on the piano, the organ) with such power and solemnity that both sat shaken and silent; it was after this reading that James expressed his regret at Whitman's "too extensive acquaintance with the foreign languages." Almost all the most "original and advanced" poets and critics and readers of the last part of the 19th Century thought Whitman as original and advanced as themselves, in manner as well as in matter. Can Whitman really be a sort of Thomas Wolfe or Carl Sandburg or Robinson Jeffers or Henry Miller—or a sort of Balzac of poetry, whose every part is crude but whose whole is somehow great? He is not, nor could he be; a poem, like Pope's spider, "lives along the line," and all the dead lines in the world will not make one live poem. As Blake says, "all sublimity is founded on minute discrimination," and it is in these "minute particulars" of Blake's that any poem has its primary existence.

To show Whitman for what he is one does not need to praise or explain or argue, one needs simply to quote. He himself said, "I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes, / We convince by our presence." Even a few of his phrases are enough to show us that Whitman was no sweeping rhetorician, but a poet of the greatest and oddest delicacy and originality and sensitivity, so far as words are concerned. This is, after all, the poet who said, "Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd hooded sharp-tooth'd touch"; who said, "Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form upright, death under the breast-bones, hell under the skull-bones"; who said, "Agonies are one of my changes of garments"; who saw grass as the "flag of my disposition," saw "the sharp-peak'd farmhouse, with its scallop'd scum and slender shoots from the gutters," heard a plane's "wild ascending lisp," and saw and heard how at the amputation "what is removed drops horribly in a pail." This is the poet for whom the sea was "howler and scooper of storms," reaching out to us with "crooked inviting fingers"; who went "leaping chasms with a pike-pointed staff, clinging to topples of brittle and blue"; who, a runaway slave, saw how "my gore dribs, thinn'd with the ooze of my skin"; who went "lithographing Kronos . . . buying drafts of Osiris"; who stared out at the "little plentiful mannikins skipping around in collars and tail'd coats, / I am aware who they are, (they are positively not worms or fleas)." For he is, at his best, beautifully witty: he says gravely, "I find I incorporate gneiss, coals, long-threaded moss, fruits, grain, esculent roots, / And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over"; and of these quadrupeds and birds "not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth." He calls advice: "Unscrew the locks from the doors! Unscrew the doors from their jambs!" He publishes the the results of research: "Having pried through the strata, analyz'd to a hair, counsel'd with doctors and calculated close, / I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones." Everybody remembers how he told the Muse to "cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts, / That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Aeneas', Odysseus' wanderings," but his account of the arrival of the "illustrious emigré" here in the New World is even better: "Bluff'd not a bit by drainpipe, gasometer, artificial fertilizers, / Smiling and pleas'd with palpable intent to stay, / She's here, install'd amid the kitchenware." Or he sees, like another Breughel, "the mechanic's wife with the babe at her nipple interceding for every person born, / Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty angels with shirts bagg'd out at their waists, / The snag-toothed hostler with red hair redeeming sins past and to come"—the passage has enough wit not only (in Johnson's phrase) to keep it sweet, but enough to make it believable. He says:

> I project my hat, sit shame-faced, and beg.
>
> Enough! Enough! Enough!
> Somehow I have been stunn'd. Stand back!
> Give me a little time beyond my cuff'd head, slumbers,
>   dreams, gaping,
> I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.

There is in such changes of tone as these the essence of wit. And Whitman is even more far-fetched than he is witty; he can say about Doubters, in the most improbable and explosive of juxtapositions: "I know every one of you, I know the sea of torment, doubt, despair and unbelief. / How the flukes splash! How they contort rapid as lightning, with splashes and spouts of blood!" Who else would have said about God: "As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side through the night, and withdraws at the break of day with stealthy tread, / Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels, swelling the house with their plenty"?—the Psalmist himself, his cup running over, would have looked at Whitman with dazzled eyes. (Whitman was persuaded by friends to hide the fact that it was God he was talking about.) He says, "Flaunt of the sunshine I need not your bask—lie over!" This unusual employment of verbs is usual enough in participle-loving Whitman, who also asks you to "look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening," or tells you, "I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags." Here are some typical beginnings of poems: "City of orgies, walks, and joys. . . . Not heaving from my ribb'd breast only. . . . O take my hand Walt Whitman! Such gliding wonders! Such sights and sounds! Such join'd unending links. . . ." He says to the objects of the world, "You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers"; sees "the sun and stars that float in the open air, / The apple-shaped earth"; says, "O suns— O grass of graves— O perpetual transfers and promotions, / If you do not say anything how can I say anything?" Not many poets have written better, in queerer and more convincing and more individual language, about the world's *gliding wonders:* the phrase seems particularly right for Whitman. He speaks of those "circling rivers the breath," of the "savage old mother incessantly crying, / To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd secret hissing"—ends a poem, once, "We have voided all but freedom and our own joy." How can one quote enough? If the reader thinks that all this is like Thomas Wolfe he *is* Thomas Wolfe; nothing else could explain it. Poetry like this is as far as possible from the work of any ordinary rhetorician, whose phrases cascade over us like suds of the oldest and most-advertised detergent.

The interesting thing about Whitman's worst language (for, just as few poets have ever written better, few poets have ever written worse) is how unusually absurd, how really ingeniously bad, such language is. I will quote none of the most famous examples; but even a line like *O culpable! I acknowledge. I exposé!* is not anything that you and I could do—only a man with the most extraordinary feel for language, or none whatsoever, could have cooked up Whitman's worst messes. For instance: what other man in all the history of this planet would have said, "I am a habitan of Vienna"? (One has an immediate vision of him as a sort of French-Canadian halfbreed to whom the

Viennese are offering, with trepidation, through the bars of a zoological garden, little mounds of whipped cream.) And *enclaircise*—why, it's as bad as *explicate!* We are right to resent his having made up his own horrors, instead of sticking to the ones that we ourselves employ. But when Whitman says, "I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious," we should realize that we are not the only ones who are amused. And the queerly bad and merely queer and queerly good will often change into one another without warning: "Hefts of the moving world, at innocent gambols silently rising, freshly exuding, / Scooting obliquely high and low"—not good, but *queer!*—suddenly becomes, "Something I cannot see puts up libidinous prongs, / Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven," and it is sunrise.

But it is not in individual lines and phrases, but in passages of some length, that Whitman is at his best. In the following quotation Whitman has something difficult to express, something that there are many formulas, all bad, for expressing; he expresses it with complete success, in language of the most dazzling originality:

> The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,
> It wrenches such ardors from me I did not know I
>   possess'd them,
> It sails me, I dab with bare feet, they are lick'd by the
>   indolent waves,
> I am cut by bitter and angry hail, I lose my breath,
> Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled in
>   fakes of death,
> At length let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,
> And that we call Being.

One hardly knows what to point at—everything works. But *wrenches* and *did not know I possess'd them;* the incredible *it sails me, I dab with bare feet; lick'd by the indolent; steep'd amid honey'd morphine; my windpipe throttled in fakes of death*—no wonder Crane admired Whitman! This originality, as absolute in its way as that of Berlioz' orchestration, is often at Whitman's command:

> I am a dance—play up there! the fit is whirling me fast!
>
> I am the ever-laughing—it is new moon and twilight,
> I see the hiding of douceurs, I see nimble ghosts whichever
>   way I look,
> Cache and cache again deep in the ground and sea, and
>   where it is neither ground nor sea.

Well do they do their jobs those journeymen divine,
Only from me can they hide nothing, and would not if they
could,
I reckon I am their boss and they make me a pet besides,
And surround me and lead me and run ahead when I walk,
To lift their sunning covers to signify me with stretch'd arms,
and resume the way;
Onward we move, a gay gang of blackguards! with mirth-shouting music and wild-flapping pennants of joy!

If you did not believe Hopkins' remark about Whitman, that *gay gang of blackguards* ought to shake you. Whitman shares Hopkins' passion for "dappled" effects, but he slides in and out of them with ambiguous swiftness. And he has at his command a language of the calmest and most prosaic reality, one that seems to do no more than present:

The little one sleeps in its cradle.
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush away
flies with my hand.
The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy
hill,
I peeringly view them from the top.

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom.
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where the
pistol has fallen.

It is like magic: that is, something has been done to us without our knowing how it was done; but if we look at the lines again we see the *gauze*, *silently*, *youngster*, *red-faced*, *bushy*, *peeringly*, *dabbled*—not that this is all we see. "Present! present!" said James; these are presented, put down side by side to form a little "view of life," from the cradle to the last bloody floor of the bedroom. Very often the things presented form nothing but a list:

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane
whistles its wild ascending lisp,
The married and unmarried children ride home to their
Thanksgiving dinner,
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a strong
arm,
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and harpoon
are ready,
The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,

> The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar,
> The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big
> wheel,
> The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day loafe
> and looks at the oats and rye,
> The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd case,
> (He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his
> mother's bed-room;)
> The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his
> case,
> He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blur with the
> manuscript,
> The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,
> What is removed drops horribly in a pail; . . .

It is only a list—but what a list! And how delicately, in what different ways—likeness and opposition and continuation and climax and anti-climax—the transitions are managed, whenever Whitman wants to manage them. Notice them in the next quotation, another "mere list":

> The bride unrumples her white dress, the minute-hand of the
> clock moves slowly,
> The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd lips,
> The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her
> tipsy and pimpled neck. . . .

The first line is joined to the third by *unrumples* and *draggles*, *white dress* and *shawl;* the second to the third by *rigid head*, *bobs*, *tipsy*, *neck;* the first to the second by *slowly*, *just-open'd*, and the slowing-down of time in both states. And occasionally one of these lists is metamorphosed into something we have no name for; the man who would call the next quotation a mere list—anybody will feel this—would boil his babies up for soap:

> Ever the hard unsunk ground,
> Ever the eaters and drinkers, ever the upward and downward
> sun,
> Ever myself and my neighbors, refreshing, wicked, real,
> Ever the old inexplicable query, ever that thorned thumb, that
> breath of itches and thirsts,
> Ever the vexer's hoot! hoot! till we find where the sly one hides
> and bring him forth,
> Ever the sobbing liquid of life,
> Ever the bandage under the chin, ever the trestles of death.

Sometimes Whitman will take what would generally be considered an unpromising subject (in this case, a woman peeping at men in bathing naked) and treat it with such tenderness and subtlety and understanding that we are ashamed of ourselves for having thought it unpromising, and murmur that Chekhov himself couldn't have treated it better:

> Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,
> Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly,
> Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome.
>
> She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,
> She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the
>   window.
>
> Which of the young men does she like the best?
> Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.
>
> Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,
> You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room.
>
> Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-ninth
>   bather,
> The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.
>
> The beards of the young men glistened with wet, it ran from
>   their long hair,
> Little streams pass'd all over their bodies.
>
> An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies,
> It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.
>
> The young men float on their backs, their white bellies bulge
>   to the sun, they do not ask who seizes fast to them,
>
> They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and
>   bending arch,
> They do not know whom they souse with spray.

And in the same poem (that "Song of Myself" in which one finds half his best work) the writer can say of a sea-fight:

> Stretched and still lies the midnight,
> Two great hulls motionless on the breast of the darkness,
> Our vessel riddled and slowly sinking, preparations to pass
>   to the one we have conquer'd,
> The captain on the quarter-deck coldly giving his orders
>   through a countenance white as a sheet,

Near by the corpse of the child that serv'd in the cabin,
The dead face of an old salt with long white hair and carefully curl'd whiskers,
The flames spite of all that can be done flickering aloft and below,
The husky voices of the two or three officers yet fit for duty,
Formless stacks of bodies and bodies by themselves, dabs of flesh upon the masts and spars,
Cut of cordage, dangle of rigging, slight shock of the soothe of waves,
Black and impassive guns, litter of powder-parcels, strong scent,
A few large stars overhead, silent and mournful shining,
Delicate snuffs of sea-breeze, smells of sedgy grass and fields by the shore, death-messages given in charge to survivors,
The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of his saw,
Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream, and long, dull, tapering groan,
These so, these irretrievable.

There are faults in this passage, and they *do not matter:* the serious truth, the complete realization of these last lines make us remember that few poets have shown more of the tears of things, and the joy of things, and of the reality beneath either tears or joy. Even Whitman's most general or political statements sometimes are good: everybody knows his "When liberty goes out of a place it is not the first to go, nor the second or third to go, / It waits for all the rest to go, it is the last"; these sentences about the United States just before the Civil War may be less familiar:

Are those really Congressmen? are those the great Judges? is that the President?
Then I will sleep awhile yet, for I see that these States sleep, for reasons;
(With gathering murk, with muttering thunder and lambent shoots we all duly awake,
South, North, East, West, inland and seaboard, we will surely awake.)

How well, with what firmness and dignity and command, Whitman does such passages! And Whitman's doubts that he has done them or anything else well—ah, there is nothing he does better:

The best I had done seemed to me blank and suspicious,

> My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not in reality
> meagre?
> I am he who knew what it was to be evil,
> I too knitted the old knot of contrariety . . .
> Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assembly,
> yet never told them a word,
> Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing,
> gnawing, sleeping,
> Played the part that still looks back on the actor and actress,
> The same old role, the role that is what we make it . . .

Whitman says once that the "look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me." This is true—sometimes it is true; but more often the silliness and affection and cant and exaggeration are there shamelessly, the Old Adam that was in Whitman from the beginning and the awful new one that he created to keep it company. But as he says, "I know perfectly well my own egotism, / Know my omnivorous lines and must not write any less." He says over and over that there are in him good and bad, wise and foolish, anything at all and its antonym, and he is telling the truth; there is in him almost everything in the world, so that one responds to him, willingly or unwillingly, almost as one does to the world, that world which makes the hairs of one's flesh stand up, which seems both evil beyond any rejection and wonderful beyond any acceptance. We cannot help seeing that there is something absurd about any judgment we make of its whole—for there is no "point of view" at which we can stand to make the judgment, and the moral categories that mean most to us seem no more to apply to its whole than our spatial or temporal or causal categories seem to apply to its beginning or its end. (But we need no arguments to make our judgments seem absurd—we feel their absurdity without argument.) In some like sense Whitman is a world, a waste with, here and there, systems blazing at random out of the darkness. Only an innocent and rigidly methodical mind will reject it for this disorganization, particularly since there are in it, here and there, little systems as beautifully and astonishingly organized as the rings and satellites of Saturn:

> I understand the large hearts of heroes,
> The courage of present times and all times,
> How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck of the
> steam-ship, and Death chasing it up and down the storm,
> How he knuckled tight and gave not back an inch, and was
> faithful of days and faithful of nights,

And chalked in large letters on a board, Be of good cheer, we
will not desert you;
How he follow'd with them and tack'd with them three days
and would not give it up,
How he saved the drifting company at last,
How the lank loose-gown'd women looked when boated from
the side of their prepared graves,
How the silent old-faced infants and the lifted sick, and the
sharp-lipp'd unshaved men;
All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well, it becomes mine,
I am the man, I suffered, I was there.

In the last lines of this quotation Whitman has reached—as great writers always reach—a point at which criticism seems not only unnecessary but absurd: these lines are so good that even admiration feels like insolence, and one is ashamed of anything that one can find to say about them. How anyone can dismiss or accept patronizingly the man who wrote them, I do not understand.

The enormous and apparent advantages of form, of omission and selection, of the highest degree of organization, are accompanied by important disadvantages—and there are far greater works than *Leaves of Grass* to make us realize this. But if we compare Whitman with that very beautiful poet Alfred Tennyson, the most skillful of all Whitman's contemporaries, we are at once aware of how limiting Tennyson's forms have been, of how much Tennyson has had to leave out, even in those discursive poems where he is trying to put everything in. Whitman's poems *represent* his world and himself much more satisfactorily than Tennyson's do his. In the past a few poets have both formed and represented, each in the highest degree; but in modern times what controlling, organizing, selecting poet has created a world with as much in it as Whitman's, a world that so plainly *is* the world? Of all modern poets he has, quantitatively speaking, "the most comprehensive soul"—and, qualitatively, a most comprehensive and comprehending one, with charities and concessions and qualifications that are rare in any time.

"Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself," wrote Whitman, as everybody remembers, and this is not naïve, or something he got from Emerson, or a complacent pose. When you organize one of the contradictory elements out of your work of art, you are getting rid not just of it, but of the contradiction of which it was a part; and it is the contradictions in works of art which make them able to represent to us—as logical and methodical generalizations cannot—our world and our selves, which are also full of contradictions. In Whitman we do not get the controlled, compressed, seemingly concordant contradictions of the great lyric poets, of a poem like, say, Hardy's "During Wind and Rain"; Whitman's contradictions are sometimes announced openly, but are more often scattered at random throughout the poems. For instance: Whitman specializes in ways of saying that there is in some sense (a very Hegelian one, generally) no evil—he says a hundred times that evil is not Real; but he also specializes in making lists of the evil of the world, lists of an unarguable reality. After his minister has recounted "the rounded catalogue divine complete," Whitman comes home and puts down what has been left out: "the countless (nineteen-twentieths) low and evil, crude and savage . . . the barren soil, the evil men, the slag and hideous rot." He ends another such catalogue with the plain unexcusing "All these—all meanness and agony without end I sitting look out upon, / See, hear, and am silent." Whitman offered himself to everybody, and said brilliantly and at length what a good thing he was offering:

> Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights,
> well entretied, braced in the beams,
> Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,
> I and this mystery here we stand.

Just for oddness, characteristicalness, differentness, what more could you ask in a letter of recommendation? (Whitman sounds as if he were recommending a house—haunted, but what foundations!) But after a few pages he is oddly different:

> Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,
> Stands amused, complacent, conpassionating, idle, unitary,
> Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable certain
> rest
> Looking with side curved head curious what will come next,
> Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it.

Tamburlaine is already beginning to sound like Hamlet: the employer feels uneasily, "Why, I might as well hire myself. . . ." And, a few pages later, Whitman puts down in ordinary-sized type, in the middle of the page, this warning to any *new person drawn toward me:*

> Do you think I am trusty and faithful?
> Do you see no further than this façade, this smooth and
> tolerant manner of me?

> Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground toward a real heroic man?
> Have you no thought O dreamer that it may be all maya, illusion?

Having wonderful dreams, telling wonderful lies, was a temptation Whitman could never resist; but telling the truth was a temptation he could never resist, either. When you buy him you know what you are buying. And only an innocent and solemn and systematic mind will condemn him for his contradictions: Whitman's catalogues of evils represent realities, and his denials of their reality represent other realities, of feeling and intuition and desire. If he is faithless to logic, to Reality As It Is—whatever that is—he is faithful to the feel of things, to reality as it seems; this is all that a poet has to be faithful to, and philosophers have been known to leave logic and Reality for it.

Whitman is more coordinate and parallel than anybody, is *the* poet of parallel present participles, of twenty verbs joined by a single subject: all this helps to give his work its feeling of raw hypnotic reality, of being that world which also streams over us joined only by *ands*, until we supply the subordinating conjunctions; and since as children we see the *ands* and not the *becauses*, this method helps to give Whitman some of the freshness of childhood. How inexhaustibly interesting the world is in Whitman! Arnold all his life kept wishing that he could see the world "with a plainness as near, as flashing" as that with which Moses and Rebekah and the Argonauts saw it. He asked with elegiac nostalgia, "Who can see the green earth any more / As she was by the sources of Time?"—and all the time there was somebody alive who saw it so, as plain and near and flashing, and with a kind of calm, pastoral, Biblical dignity and elegance as well, sometimes. The *thereness* and *suchness* of the world are incarnate in Whitman as they are in few other writers.

They might have put on his tombstone WALT WHITMAN: HE HAD HIS NERVE. He is the rashest, the most inexplicable and unlikely—the most impossible, one wants to say—of poets. He somehow *is* in a class by himself, so that one compares him with other poets about as readily as one compares *Alice* with other books. (Even his free verse has a completely different effect from anybody else's.) Who would think of comparing him with Tennyson or Browning or Arnold or Baudelaire?—it is Homer, or the sagas, or something far away and long ago, that comes to one's mind only to be dismissed; for sometimes Whitman *is* epic, just as *Moby Dick* is, and it surprises us to be able to use truthfully this word that we have misused so many times. Whitman *is* grand, and elevated, and comprehensive, and real with an astonishing reality, and many other things—the critic points at his qualities in despair and wonder, all method failing, and simply calls them by their names. And the range of these qualities is the most extraordinary thing of all. We can surely say about him, "He was a man, take him for all in all. I shall not look upon his like again"—and wish that people had seen this and not tried to be his like: one Whitman is miracle enough, and when he comes again it will be the end of the world.

I have said so little about Whitman's faults because they are so plain: baby critics who have barely learned to complain of the lack of ambiguity in *Peter Rabbit* can tell you all that is wrong with *Leaves of Grass*. But a good many of my readers must have felt that it is ridiculous to write an essay about the obvious fact that Whitman is a great poet. It is ridiculous—just as, in 1851, it would have been ridiculous for anyone to write an essay about the obvious fact that Pope was no "classic of our prose" but a great poet. Critics have to spend half their time reiterating whatever ridiculously obvious things their age or the critics of their age have found it necessary to forget: they say despairingly, at parties, that Wordsworth is a great poet, and *won't* bore you, and tell Mr. Leavis that Milton is a great poet whose deposition *hasn't* been accomplished with astonishing ease by a few words from Eliot. . . . There is something essentially ridiculous about critics, anyway: what is good is good without our saying so, and beneath all our majesty we know this.

Let me finish by mentioning another quality of Whitman's—a quality, delightful to me, that I have said nothing of. If some day a tourist notices, among the ruins of New York City, a copy of *Leaves of Grass*, and stops and picks it up and reads some lines in it, she will be able to say to herself: "How very American! If he and his country had not existed, it would have been impossible to imagine them."

Whitman's "Lilacs" and the Tradition of Pastoral Elegy

RICHARD P. ADAMS

WHITMAN liked to picture himself as an innocent, primitive genius whose "barbaric yawp" was prompted by nature, not culture, and whose originality was ignorant of precedents and uncontaminated by book learning. But modern scholars and critics have shown that he and his art are not so simple as they pretend to be. They are products of a well-advanced artistic and literary development. My purpose is to examine one of his best poems, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," in relation to one of the oldest, most highly respected literary traditions in our civilization—that of pastoral elegy. Everyone knows that "Lilacs" is an elegy, and several writers have compared it in a general way to others, such as "Lycidas," "Adonais," and Emerson's "Threnody."[1] George Meyer of Newcomb College has pointed out the relation of "Lilacs" to pastoral elegy in class lectures, and doubtless others have noticed the same relation in various ways. But no one to my knowledge has made a systematic study of it.

This circumstance, which is rather surprising when we think of it, may be a fair indication of the success with which Whitman covered his cultural tracks. But, by my count, out of seventeen devices commonly used in pastoral elegies from Bion to Arnold,[2] seven appear in "Lilacs." They are the announcement that the speaker's friend or alter ego is dead and is to be mourned; the sympathetic mourning of nature, with the

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[1] H. S. Canby, *Walt Whitman* (Boston, 1943), p. 240; James Thomson, *Walt Whitman* (London, 1910), p. 36; and G. W. Allen, *The Solitary Singer* (New York, 1955), p. 341.

[2] See G. Norlin, "The Conventions of Pastoral Elegy," *AJP*, XXXII (1911), 296–312, and C. G. Osgood's note in *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. E. Greenlaw et al. (*The Minor Poems*, Baltimore, 1943), I, 399.

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use of the so-called pathetic fallacy; the placing of flowers on the bier; a notice of the irony of nature's revival of life in the spring, when the dead man must remain dead; the funeral procession with other mourners; the eulogy of the dead man; and the resolution of the poem in some formula of comfort or reconciliation.

The other ten, omitted from "Lilacs," are the dramatic framework; the formula "Where were ye, nymphs?"; the inquiry of friends concerning the cause of the speaker's grief; the account of when and how the man died; Echo's lament; the dead man's biography; the pastoral setting; the use of archaisms; the reference to Aphrodite, Urania, or Clio as the dead man's mother or lover; and the account of the dying speech and death.

From Whitman's point of view these ten omissions can be reduced to only two. The first is an avoidance of the literally pastoral element together with all reference to classical mythology. The second is the elimination of any personal reference to the speaker or the dead man that would tend to keep the poem from being about the death of all men. Neither omission damages the fundamental structure or meaning of the traditional elegy, and neither requires to be explained on grounds of ignorance. The first can be accounted to Whitman's bias in favor of the modern over the ancient, and the second to his carefulness never to celebrate the individual at the expense of the general.

Any theory that depended on an assumption of Whitman's ignorance of the conventions of pastoral elegy would be suspect from the start. He must have known "Lycidas," which embodies nearly all of them.[3] He also knew Shelley and referred to him more than once as one of the greatest of English poets.[4] He claimed that he was not well acquainted with Shelley's works,[5] but he admitted on at least one occasion that he was intensely interested in Shelley and Byron as persons if not as poets.[6] He may have minimized his familiarity with Shelley, in somewhat the same way as he did his early knowledge of Emerson, because he had borrowed more heavily from both writers than he wanted to admit in view of his claims to complete originality. This possibility seems especially strong in connection with the 1855 Preface to *Leaves of Grass,* which has a good deal in common with Shelley's "A Defence of Poetry."[7] Whitman was interested enough to clip the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" out of an anthology and "To a Skylark" out of some book, probably before 1855.[8] A priori, it seems unlikely that he would not have read "Adonais" by 1865; and there, as in "Lycidas," he would have found almost all the conventions of pastoral elegy as they appear in the older tradition.[9]

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[3] See J. H. Hanford, "The Pastoral Elegy and Milton's *Lycidas,*" *PMLA,* XXV (1910), 409–446.

[4] See, e.g., *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman,* ed. H. L. Traubel et al. (New York, 1902), VI, 289, and VII, 23.

[5] H. L. Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden,* II (New York, 1908), 345.

[6] *Ibid.,* IV (Philadelphia, 953), 452.

Moreover, there are some remarkably specific resemblances in thought and imagery between "Lilacs" and some of the pastoral elegies, notably "Adonais." According to E. R. Wasserman's recent study, the dominant symbols of "Adonais" are light, which is embodied in a star and which represents life, and moisture, which appears as a mist or cloud and which represents death.[10] Whitman associates a star with the living Lincoln and a cloud with Lincoln's death. The star is the same in both poems, Venus, the evening—and also the morning—star. Venus may be the "day-star" of "Lycidas"; it is certainly the "Hesper-Phosphor" which is Tennyson's final symbol of immortality in "In Memoriam." Its meaning is indicated in the epigraph to "Adonais," an aphorism from Plato which Shelley translated,

> Thou wert the morning star among the living,
>   Ere thy fair light had fled;—
> Now, having died, thou art, as Hesperus, giving
>   New splendour to the dead.
>
> (BARNARD, p. 386)

These uses of Venus are in harmony with the oldest associations of pastoral elegy. Venus, as the lover of Adonis in Bion's Lament and in the fertility myth that Bion had in mind, represents the principle of life as well as of love and of the rebirth of nature in the spring. Whitman may not have been fully aware of these associations, but he knew that the evening star was Venus and that it was also the morning star, and he must have known the story of Venus and Adonis. Milton, Shelley, and Tennyson were so keenly aware of the classical references that even if

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[7] See Allen, p. 156.

[8] Allen, p. 127; *Complete Writings*, X, 82 (also p. 67 for another clipping on Shelley).

[9] See notes in *Shelley: Selected Poems . . .* , ed. Ellsworth Barnard (New York, 1944), pp. 386–416.

[10] "*Adonais:* Progressive Revelation as a Poetic Mode," *ELH*, XXI (Dec. 1954), 282, 292.

Whitman did nothing more than borrow their terms he might be said to have incorporated the ancient fertility myth in his poem.

Whitman's thrush in "Lilacs" has a close resemblance to some of Shelley's birds. In "Adonais" "Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale" associates Keats with the bird which in his own great ode is a prime symbol of immortality. In "A Defence of Poetry" Shelley remarks that "A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why." And in the poem Whitman clipped and saved, "To a Skylark," the bird is said to be

> Like a poet hidden
>   In the light of thought,
> Singing hymns unbidden,
>   Till the world is wrought
> To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not . . .

Whitman liked to imagine himself, in similar terms, as a singer hidden and alone. He says in "Starting from Paumanok," "Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New World." Addressing the bird in "Out of the Cradle," he says, "O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me, / O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating you . . ." The thrush in "Lilacs" is introduced in the same situation:

> In the swamp in secluded recesses,
> A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song,
>
> Solitary the thrush,
> The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
> Sings by himself a song.

In "Adonais" the nightingale is parallel to Echo, who is "a shadow of all sounds," hidden in the mountains, and who "will no more reply to . . . amorous birds," a passage which Shelley borrowed from the Lament for Bion attributed to Moschus. Whitman makes no use of the classical nymph Echo in "Lilacs," but he does speak of "the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul" by the bird's song, which is the substance of his poem.

"Lilacs" is very close to "Adonais" in the use both poets make of the irony of death and the thought or memory of death in the spring. The classical source is again the Lament for Bion: "Ah me, when the mallows wither in the garden, and the green parsley, and the curled tendrils of the anise, on a later day they live again, and spring in another year; but we men, we, the great and mighty, or wise, when once we have died, in hollow earth we sleep, gone down into silence; a right long, and endless, and unawakening sleep." [11] Shelley emphasizes this irony in "Adonais," where he says, "Ah, woe is me! Winter is come and gone, / But grief returns with the revolving year"; and again,

> Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
> Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
> By sightless lightning?

That is, shall there be conservation of matter and energy, but not of human life? The date of Lincoln's death, 15 April, made a similar emphasis easy and natural in "Lilacs." The lilacs were actually blooming then in Brooklyn, and Whitman remarked later, "By one of those caprices that enter and give tinge to events without being at all a part of them, I find myself always reminded of the great tragedy of that day by the sight and odor of these blossoms. It never fails." [12] His use of lilacs in the poem is not capricious, but functional:

> Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
> Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
> And thought of him I love.

The handling of the irony of death and the memory of death in the spring is not explicit; Whitman lets the juxtaposition of images demonstrate it emotionally, or aesthetically, and makes no logical statement about it. But it is the same irony that Shelley found in the Lament for Bion and used in "Adonais."

The reference of lilacs in Whitman's poem is broader than their meaning as representing the rebirth of life in the spring, important as that is. They are also associated more generally, as flowers usually are in the tradition of pastoral elegy, with love. The "heart-shaped leaves" are mentioned three times, and "the perfume strong I love" is related to the leaves before the word "perfume" occurs, twice, in the phrases "what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?" and "I'll perfume the grave of him I love." Then the star and "the lilac with mastering odor" hold the speaker back from the attraction of the bird's song until he is joined by "the knowledge of death" and "the thought of death," after which he listens to the song and realizes its meaning and is reconciled. All the major symbols are related in terms of love: the song is of sorrowing love for the dead man, the star is Venus and Venus is the goddess of love, and the lilac is the heart-shaped reminder exuding the mastering odor of love. At the end, as "retrievements out of the night," we are given "Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul, / There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim." So the associated symbols of love remain in the soul of the singer, in the darkness of death, among the "fragrant" trees.

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[11] *Theocritus, Bion and Moschus*, tr. A. Lang (London, 1932), p. 201.

[12] *Complete Writings*, V, 246 (Whitman's lecture on the death of Lincoln, first given in New York, 14 April 1879).

Shelley also systematically relates his major symbols to the theme of love. His Urania seems to be not only the goddess of astronomy, or the Muse of spiritual poetry, but the Uranian Aphrodite as well, the goddess of spiritual love (Barnard, p. 394). Keats is compared, in an apparent echo from "Lamia," to "a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished, / And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew." Even the cloud that seems to connote death in "Adonais" as in "Lilacs" is treated as one of Keats's personified Dreams, who, weeping for love of him, melts away. And "the lorn nightingale / Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain" as loving friends mourn Keats—a treatment that may cause us to wonder if Whitman borrowed from "Adonais" for "Out of the Cradle" as well as for "Lilacs."

These parallels indicate only part of the whole relation of "Lilacs" to the tradition of pastoral elegy. The rest involves some questions of metaphysical meaning and aesthetic value that are much more important than any particular resemblances of wording or imagery. The basic requirement imposed on any elegist, whatever his place in the tradition, is to effect some kind of reconciliation between men's desire for immortality and their knowledge that death is inevitable. The pattern by which this requirement is met is remarkably stable throughout the history of the genre: first, the fact is given that the speaker's friend is dead; second, various other friends mourn with the speaker, and he realizes that death must come to all, including himself; third and last, he is comforted, usually by some assurance or at least suggestion that his friend is immortal in spite of death. The speaker's emotion runs from dismay and sorrow to despair, and thence to hope and often rejoicing.

But the formulas, particularly that of the final consolation, have changed at various points in the course of the tradition. In the fertility cults, comfort was found in the faith that the demigod would be reborn or revived, that the goddess of fertility would rejoice, and that the earth would be replenished in the spring. In the classical elegies, there is usually some indication that the speaker's friend will be given a comparable kind of immortality. Christian elegies nearly always reinforce this pattern with references to the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, holding out the hope of immortality and heaven to all men. In "Lycidas" both formulas are used: the dead man simultaneously becomes an angel in a Christian heaven and a pagan "genius of the shore." Romantic poets tend to modify the formula still further and in an even more radical fashion.

"Adonais" may be said to contain very nearly the whole process and history of this changing tradition. It begins with an almost literal incorporation of the classical point of view, as well as the classical conventions, and then it works almost completely away from both. Most critics have considered this shift a fault, believing that Shelley leaves an unresolved inconsistency, or even a contradiction of views. But Wasserman persuasively argues that the structure of "Adonais" is progressive, in that it presents two inadequate ways of understanding death and immortality before arriving at the satisfactory one with which it concludes.[13] It may be said in the present context that Shelley uses the old formulas only to reject them, or, more precisely, that he aims to transcend the tradition of pastoral elegy in modern romantic terms. "Adonais" works from the classical mode and imagery into a romantic statement of the meaning of life, death, and immortality.

This development involves, among other changes, a shift of emphasis away from the allegorical method used in both pagan and Christian elegies, and tends to erase the distinction carefully made by humanist poets between mind and matter, or between the human individual and the universe. Romantic poets emphasize instead the relations, affinities, and sympathies they find or imagine between the individual and the environment, both natural and social. In their organic picture of the universe they see the particular organism, such as the human mind or personality, taking its place as one of many functional elements that make up the unified whole. The life of an individual is one aspect of the life of the universe, and it is included in, rather than set apart from, its environment. Accordingly, birth is often regarded as the emergence of an individuality from the greater life of the universe, and death as a reabsorption of that individuality into the living whole. Life is eternal, whether the individual is or not, and the individual life is one among many particular manifestations of the living universal principle. A romantic elegist can hardly avoid expressing some attitude, opinion, or feeling about this doctrine.

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[13] Passim; most clearly summarized on p. 295.

Wordsworth, for example, in the Immortality Ode (although that poem is not formally an elegy) appears to reason that, because we feel our relation to nature more keenly when we are young than when we are old, we must have had a purer relation before birth than afterward to the principle of life that pervades the universe; therefore we may expect to return to the prenatal relation after we die. Shelley, in "Adonais," says that Keats has been assimilated, "made one with Nature," by "the one Spirit's plastic stress" which gives all things their shape and beauty. This Coleridgean use of the word "plastic" indicates that Shelley has in mind the organic metaphor of the romantics, rather than the Platonic archetype, as the structural principle in terms of which Keats's spirit is assimilated to the spirit of nature. The same formula seems to underlie the imagery by means of which Arnold suggests, in "Thyrsis," that because the elm tree remains to assure him of the Scholar-Gypsy's continued life and quest for knowledge, he knows that his friend Clough also lives after death in the same eternal search. Tennyson tries emotionally to reject the formula at one point:

> That each, who seems a separate whole,
>   Should move his rounds, and fusing all
>   The skirts of self again, should fall
> Remerging in the general Soul,
>
> Is faith as vague as all unsweet . . .

But the final resolution of "In Memoriam" is an acceptance of the idea that the speaker's love is "vaster passion" than before, because his friend's soul in death is "mix'd with God and Nature." In the end "we close with all we loved, / And all we flow from, soul in soul." Emerson, with his usual optimism, finds no difficulty; the "deep Heart" comforts him in "Threnody" by saying that

> When frail Nature can no more,
> Then the Spirit strikes the hour:
> My servant Death, with solving rite,
> Pours finite into infinite.

For Emerson, death is not the end of life but a change that enables life to continue by freeing it from the restrictions of the particular form it happens to take on earth.

Whitman's belief is more complex that Emerson's, but it is equally in the romantic tradition. His plainest expression of it is perhaps the statement in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry":

I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,
I too had receiv'd identity by my body,
That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I
knew I should be of my body.

Whitman is saying, if I understand him correctly, that identity is determined by the organic structure of the material body, which is the soul, which is the form life takes in any individual at any time. Life is eternal, and we are therefore in some sense immortal. As Whitman also says, in "Song of Myself," "All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses, / And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier." In "Passage to India" he calls on his soul to "Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only," fearlessly into the seas of death, for "are they not all the seas of God?" Everything to Whitman is life, and all life is divine, and there is nothing to fear from any change, even death. His contemplation of the grass in "Song of Myself" leads him to believe that "there is really no death, / And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it . . ." In the Preface to the 1876 edition, he reaffirms this conviction, "estimating Death, not at all as the cessation, but as somehow what I feel it must be, the entrance upon by far the greatest part of existence, and something that Life is at least as much for, as it is for itself."

There is no explicit statement in "Lilacs" of Whitman's faith in immortality, but the imagery is consistent with his ideas expressed elsewhere. When the speaker of the elegy has faced and realized the fact of death, as given in the song of the thrush, he finds some comfort in the thought that it is not the dead who suffer but the living. Death is the end of suffering; therefore the song of the thrush and "the tallying song" of the speaker's soul are described as "Victorious song, death's outlet song," and the realization of death is not fearful but reassuring. The very sorrow that the speaker feels and the song expresses is one kind of suffering from which the dead man is free. At the same time the sorrow and the song are both contributions to the remembrance of "the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands," which is a kind of immortality. By a somewhat paradoxical train of logic, the speaker celebrates and rejoices, not by giving up or forgetting his sorrow but by revaluing it. He does not deny the reality of death, does not say, as most elegists do in one way or another, "He is not dead." Rather he says, "He is dead—therefore I rejoice."

The final worth of Whitman's elegy lies more than that of most elegies, I would suggest, in the song itself:

> Song of the bleeding throat,
> Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I know
> If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st surely die.)

The song, as an expression or "outlet" of feeling, is to some extent a substitute for death in its relief of suffering. But more than that, and more important to us as readers, it is valuable first as a lasting monument to the dead man and our feeling of love and sorrow for him, and second as a beautiful object in its own right, quite aside from any reference to its occasion. The transmutation of experience into art is a mystery that we might not want to explain if we could, but it is a reality we all recognize. In "Lilacs" Whitman made out of death and sorrow and suffering one of the greatest works of literary art thus far produced in America, and by so doing he made himself immortal.

Whitman's Curious Warble: Reminiscence and Reconciliation

PAUL FUSSELL, JR.

> Even as a boy, I had the fancy, the wish, to write a piece, perhaps a poem, about the sea-shore—that suggesting, dividing line, contact, junction, the solid marrying the liquid—that curious, lurking something, (as doubtless every objective form finally becomes to the subjective spirit,) which means far more than its mere first sight, grand as that is—blending the real and ideal, and each made portion of the other.
>
> "How I Still Get Around at Sixty and Take Notes" (1881)

THE CURRENT WHITMAN REVIVAL, which has been both registered and stimulated by the recent writings of Randall Jarrell, Leslie Fiedler, and Richard Chase, seems to have drawn much sustenance from a

SOURCE: *Reprinted from* The Presence of Walt Whitman: Selected Papers from the English Institute *(New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 28–51, by permission of the publisher.*

sharpened recognition of the conventional element of artifice in all poems and of the fictive element in all poetical careers. Because recent biographical findings, notably Gay Wilson Allen's, have reminded us that the gulf between the actual and the poetical biography is as wide in Whitman as in most writers of poems, we are beginning to learn how to redeem Whitman from life, from politics, and from folk philosophy. Pope tells us in his poems that his own satiric motives are noble and disinterested, and that his father is saintly; Whitman tells us that he witnessed interesting things during a trip to Nevada, and that his mother is a perfect specimen. Both are exercising themselves in the art of telling lies successfully. When Whitman asserts in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" that it was in the month of May that the male mockingbird enjoyed his female, and that he bemoaned the loss of her until the month of September, or when he tells us that the boy in his poem experienced his seashore epiphany just before dawn, we shall find out what is going on in the poem more successfully by inquiring into the way poems in general work and by consulting the conventions of certain kinds of poems than by inquiring into matters of bird migrations or into the details of Whitman's early life near the Long Island beaches.

Although we may not wish to proceed in this direction so precipitately as Northrop Frye, who declares that "poetry can only be made out of other poems," I think that few any longer will feel disillusioned to be reminded that if Whitman is a poet, he is then preeminently not a person to whom certain experiences happen but rather a person who has learned the tactics of constructing certain recognizable verbal artifacts; and that his artifacts will be permanent to the degree that they resemble not the unlicked episodes of actual experience but the significant shapes of a world of universal forms. If we have learned anything as critics in the past fifty years, what we have learned is to welcome artificial golden birds that warble mechanically in expensive golden trees; we are learning likewise not merely to accept but actually to rejoice in butterflies manufactured of cardboard. Whitman's "pose" is less his personal property than an inevitable property of the world of poems.

In approaching "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," we may thus dismiss at the outset questions of Whitman's assumed "lost lover," thought by some to lie behind the making of the poem; we may relieve ourselves of the task of speculating whether the voice of the bird in the poem represents the voice of the opera-singer Marietta Alboni; we may even disregard questions of what actually happened to Whitman to impel him to "record" his presumed experience in this poem. I do not want to deny that Whitman had an experience; I merely want to assert that the only valuable experience the poem offers us is a wholly artistic one.

Turning, then, from biographical to artistic questions, we may begin by asking what kind of a poem we have here: what is its genre? Most obviously, it is related to the standard Romantic lyric of reminiscence whose theme is the origin in boyhood of the lyric impulse and its precarious maintenance into a cooler world of manhood. Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" provides, perhaps, the clearest analogue. Robert D. Faner suggests that the poem is really a sort of miniature Italian opera without music, both in structure (that is, alternating recitative and aria, which culminate in a mode of ensemble) and in theme (that is, the theme, sacred to early-nineteenth-century Italian opera, of consummated love followed by separation and death). Again, Northrop Frye, by suggesting that the poem of "emblematic vision," as he calls it, is a complex development of the genre of the riddle, gives us a means for a fresh apprehension of the importance of Whitman's lines 158–159:

> O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere,)
> O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

Although these are useful approaches, we can perhaps go further by conceiving of the poem as a very American exercise, both in theme and in occasion and method. In theme it resembles the representative American work in which a boy like Huck Finn or Ishmael or Nick Adams or Ike McCaslin, positioned in the midst of physical nature, discovers the idea of death and then enacts some strategic ritual by which his discovery is brought into coherence with his journey toward maturity. In this sense the poem resembles a memorializing of an initiation ritual; and it is the artistic imitation of this ritual that the American writer seems hardly able to avoid at some point in his career: James's Isabel Archer as well as Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway come immediately to mind.

In its occasion and method as well the poem appears to belong to an American genre. Because we seem to need a name for this kind of poem, I suggest the term *The American Shore Ode*. The characteristics of this kind of poem are these: it is a lyric of some length and philosophic density spoken (usually at a specific place) on an American beach; its theme tends to encompass the relationship of the wholeness and flux of the sea to the discreteness and fixity of land objects. This kind of poem does more than simply engage in transcendental meditations about the sea: the important thing is the dissimilarity between shore and sea, sand and water, separateness and cohesiveness, analysis and synthesis—a dissimilarity which explains and justifies their paradoxical marriage. The proximity of briers to ocean in Eliot's "The Dry Salvages" ("the salt is on the briar rose") and Whitman's "Out of the Cradle" ("Out from the patches of briers . . . I . . . A reminiscence sing") is a detail reminding us that we might consider Eliot's poem as belonging to this genre. And so might we consider such poems as Lanier's "The Marshes of Glynn"; Longfellow's "Seaweed" and "The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls"; Emerson's "Seashore"; Trumbull Stickney's "At Sainte-Marguerite"; Hilda Doolittle's "Sea Gods," Jeffers's "Night," Crane's "Voyages," Howard Baker's "Ode to the Sea," Marianne Moore's "A Grave," and Stevens's "The Idea of Order at Key West." Although Pound's Canto II does not, clearly, occur on Long Island, its sharp sense of the relationship of sea to shore may be thought to betray, if not its genre, at least its essential nationality. Even Frost's unpretentious "Neither Out Far nor in Deep," William Meredith's "The Open Sea," and Josephine Miles's eight-line poem "Career" ("Who run the sea wall in diapers / Look to their job") seem close to this genre. And I would suggest that the reasons why the Shore Ode seems an American kind of poem are less topographical than philosophic. The shore-surf relationship provides the American imagination with a naturalistic "uniform hieroglyphic" of a Romantic reconciliation of dualisms: the relationship can serve as an emblem of the reconciliation of separate states with the idea of a federal union; it can provide an image of the reconciliation of the aristocratic inner world of solipsistic singularity with the democratic outer world of perceptual uniformity, or, in Whitman's terms, a reconciling of the "simple separate person" with the "En-Masse"; and finally (and this is the most important use of the image for a New World, non-Christian sensibility like Whitman's), it can serve as a means of reconciling, without recourse to sacred history, love with loss, life with death, time with eternity. The fundamental shore-sea image of this kind of basic American poem makes significant appearances even in novels: at the beginning of *Moby-Dick* Ishmael points out to us the thousands of "mortal men" (the adjective is important) who peer seaward from the edges of Manhattan on "a dreamy Sabbath afternoon"; "nothing will content them," we are told, "but the extremest limit of the land." And we remember Hemingway's Jake Barnes, who, after the orgy of mortality and losses at Pamplona, betakes himself in solitude to the beach at San Sebastian. Whether we encounter it in poem or novel, the shore-sea image appears to lie very near the heart of the American contemplative and speculative experience. I do not intend to imply that Whitman, a helpless victim of a sort of determinism of thematic and formal archetypes, is obliged to write this kind of poem; but I am trying to imply that, given his nationality and his philosophic predispositions, Whitman could have put together "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" almost as satisfactorily if, instead of wending as a boy the shores he knew, he had frequented a library and quietly hummed Emma Hart Willard's "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep" while adapting the dualistic formulations of Hegel, Coleridge, and Wordsworth to the new anatomies of the American circumstance.

Once we begin to perceive what kind of a poem is before us, we are ready to attend to its details and structure. Coming upon the metric of the first line, we observe its absolute symmetry and regularity: one way of expressing it would be to say that a dactyl and a trochee are separated by a caesura from a dactyl and a trochee. Regardless of the technical terms we use, we will see that the metrical balance of the two metrically equal halves of the line is as artfully contrived as if the line had been written for a seventeenth-century French tragedy. If the metrical pattern at the beginning of the first line sounds familiar to us, it does so perhaps because the first four syllables of the line create a cadence (resembling the classical choriambus) which is one of the most frequent in Whitman's poems, and to which he is so devoted that it almost becomes the metrical hallmark of the standard Whitman title, even in his prose: it is the pattern we hear behind "Song of Myself" and *Specimen Days;* and behind the first four syllables of "Song of the Open Road," "Passage to India," "Notes of a Half-Paralytic," "Children of Adam," "Song of the Broad-Axe," "Prayer of Columbus," and "Whispers of Heavenly Death." The sophisticated impulse toward symmetrical structure that impelled Whitman to revise the abrupt and conversational "Out of the rocked cradle" of the first version is just as apparent in his management of the larger details of the whole structure. As Fredson Bowers concludes after a precise textual study of many of the MSS of the third edition (1860) of *Leaves of Grass*, "These poems were built, for all their air of carefree extemporaneousness."

Lines 1 to 22 constitute a richly orchestrated prologue, and, in addition, contain in one important cluster of images (lines 18–22) a kind of version in miniature of the poem as a whole. The strange prepositional suspensions and the extravagant periodic structure of the one initial sentence charge the opening with an illusion of excitement and breathlessness; and the very reiterated curiousness of the prepositional idiom reinforces the portentousness of the moonlit, dreamlike setting. What the speaker begins by saying is that he sings a reminiscence not "of" or "about" a number of particulars for which he once found the "key" to fuse into a whole significant experience; he sings instead a reminiscence "*out* of" these particulars. The "out of" suggests an image of conscious and purposive extraction, of a muscular squeezing of meaning from discrete phenomena, the way one would squeeze juice from a handful of grapes. Here the purposiveness and vigor of the activity of memory clearly distinguish the occasion from one of daydreaming or accidental imagining. The intellectual occasion here is not one of a static loafing and inviting the soul: it is a conscious backward journeying, a quest, like that in Frost's "Directive," solemnly undertaken by means of the rituals appropriate to it.

Taking the first twenty-two lines as a unit, we may begin by paraphrasing thus: "I, made by this experience into a coherent man-boy; now through this remembered experience able to contrive poems reconciling man's present state with his post-mortal future; I, now become a poet capable through this experience of reconciling the hopeless with the hopeful; I record here a reminiscence of a meaningful moment from my past, a reminiscence compounded of a number of disparate phenomena which cohere in my memory to suggest the way they can be fixed in poetic form. I make my poem by extracting significance from the following recalled particulars: the endlessly moving sea and breaking waves; the instinctual sound-box ('musical shuttle') of the male mockingbird; and the September midnight when I finally began to attain this revelation; I draw significance from 'over' the sands where the boy 'I' wandered barefoot in darkness; I extract significance both 'down from' the distant, inaccessible (because vaguely holy) luminous ring ('halo') around the moon, and 'out from' the nearby, accessible beach plants and their shadows. Reconciling and fusing my present moment of composition with my past moment of epiphany, I make my poem from my past experience and my present memories of the mockingbird's song of love and loss, of life and death; and from my past experience and my present memories of what that song taught me about poetic themes and techniques. Even more important, I make central use in my poem of my memory of 'the word' *death*, 'stronger and more delicious than any' other word or symbol. So packed with meaning are the materials I recall that their mere cataloguing starts me revisiting the scene already: they are carrying me back there hurriedly before I am fully prepared." And now, at line 18, we come upon a miniature, compressed version of the primary argument of the whole poem:

A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,
Taking all hints to use them [the details which the reminiscence is being extracted "out of"], but swiftly leaping beyond them,
A reminiscence sing.

The action of the poem, which is a quest through purposive reminiscence arriving, finally, at the reconciliation of opposites, appears to be almost totally figured forth in these five lines, where the sand becomes an emblem of the "here" (or time) and the sea of the "hereafter" (or eternity). "Pains," likewise, are associated with the un-unified and thus initially meaningless particulars of the beach (that is, the "*sterile* sands," the "*patches* of briers and blackberries," and "the mystic play of *shadows*," shadows which, as the speaker's mode of simile tells us, are really quite fixed and dead but which twine and twist *as if* they were alive). The beach is seen as the world of mutually isolated phenomena, lifeless and insignificant in their lonely discreteness; it bears a kinship with the ashen and gritty world of Carlyle's "Everlasting No," of Arnold's "Dover Beach," and even of Eliot's "Waste Land." But the waves, confronted once by the boy and now once again in memory by the man-boy, are associated paradoxically both with infinite nonidentity and, at the same time, with infinite joys and the hereafter. Operating through the juxtapositioning of these dualistic images, lines 18–22 thus pose the problem of the poem: implicitly they ask the question, How are sand and waves, analysis and synthesis, time and eternity, pains and joys, here and hereafter to be fused? And line 18 ("A man, yet by these tears a little boy again") foreshadows the sublimely successful self-union (to use Emerson's term for it) between boyhood and maturity which the poem enacts in the very last section (lines 174–183).

It is this anticipation of the end of the poem in its beginning, this prefiguring of the final triumph in the tight image-cluster (lines 18–20) of the boy prone on the sands confronting the waves, that Whitman seems to be calling attention to in his coyly anonymous remarks on the poem, remarks published on the editorial page of the *Saturday Press* for December 27, 1859, where the poem made its first appearance illogically titled "A Child's Reminiscence":

> WALT WHITMAN'S POEM
>
> Our readers may, if they choose, consider as our Christmas or New Year's present to them, the curious warble, by Walt Whitman, of "A Child's Reminiscence," on our First Page. Like the "Leaves of Grass," the purport of this wild and plaintive song, well-enveloped and eluding definition, is positive and unquestionable, like the effect of music.
>
> The piece will bear reading many times—perhaps, indeed, only comes forth, as from recesses, by many repetitions.

Although Whitman's phrase "well-enveloped" implies that the "purport" of the poem is so dense as to "elude" immediate "definition," it suggests also that the central portion of the poem (lines 23–173) is enveloped by a structural envelope in which the experience is first anticipated and then recapitulated. Again, it is apparent that the poem is built out of two kinds of discourse, and we find that an envelope of "recitative" (that is, relatively discursive utterance, or man-song) surrounds a unified core of central "aria" (that is, florid, apostrophic, lyric utterance, or bird-song). The effect of the over-all envelope structure is to suggest a now permanent containment of the one kind of rhetoric within the other; or, to put it another way, to suggest a reconciliation of two opposed modes of utterance, the unconscious and the conscious, the instinctual mode of "the musical shuttle" and the artful, painfully learned mode of the human voice engaged in rhetorical stratagems. We might even entertain the simplification that the reconciliation effected by the "well-enveloped" structure is one between lyric and epic modes. That is, the rhetorical characteristics which the structure attempts to fuse are the traditional orderliness of narration, or epic, with the traditional impulsiveness of apostrophe, or lyric. If the poem does succeed in effecting a marriage between these two modes, we may say that it consummates for one intense and brilliant moment (lines 175–178) a rare union between the Aristotelian and the Longinian senses of literature.

After the twenty-two-line prologue and anticipation, the speaker provides narrative background in nine lines presented in suspended participial syntax. The mode of syntax here operates as if the action were not completed, as indeed, in one sense, it will not be until near the end of the poem (line 144), when we burst forth from a complex of largely incomplete participial suspensions into a fully coherent universe of discourse in full predication. In these nine lines of narrative background (lines 23–31) the speaker places the beginning of the recollected action in May among images of fecundity: the lilac scent is in the air, the conventional Whitmanian grass is growing, and, couched among the briers on the shore, two mockingbirds from the amply more fertile South wait for the hatching of their eggs.

The cycle of the birds' love is almost complete, and in the next section, a nine-line "aria," the male bird delivers from his musical shuttle an impulsive apostrophic lyric, an instinctual address of ecstasy to the sun. Considered wholly by itself, the he-bird's first aria appears simple enough, but seen in context, it accumulates irony. The burden of the song is a complacent and pitifully optimistic celebration of the permanence of joy. The solitary singer assures himself that "While we two keep together," experience will be a matter of "Singing all time, minding no time." But ironically, "time" is one of the "pains" to be "minded," as the abrupt transition to the recitative passage which follows (lines 41–51) makes clear. This eleven-line narrative passage, announcing the unanticipated disappearance of the female bird and the gradually increasing anxiety both of the male bird and of the observing barefoot boy, is couched in an ambiguous syntax which repays close inspection. For in line 49 we find the ambiguous participle "flitting," which modifies at once both "I" and "the remaining one, the he-bird": already in the poem boy and bird are drawing together, as they must if the predicament of the one is to be readily "translated" (cf. line 31) into terms apprehensible by the other. Although the boy does not yet consciously recognize the bird as his "dusky demon and brother" (line 175), he does now "flit" birdlike "from brier to brier by day," "cautiously peering" (cf. line 31) out of hiding the way the bird peers in search of his mate.

Just as the bird's joyous first aria consisted in an apostrophe to the sun, so his second aria (lines 52–54) is an apostrophe to the south wind, which he exhorts to "blow my mate to me." Despite a certain distress in its tone, the male bird's second aria is still full of hope, for he seems to assume that he knows where his mate has gone—she has, he imagines, slipped momentarily home to Alabama. But the reader is already fully aware of the dramatic irony, for he has been carefully told by the speaker back in line 45 that the she-bird did not return, "Nor ever appear'd again." It was on a morning in spring that the female disappeared; all summer long the male reiterates his naïvely hopeful lyric, which changes finally, near the end of summer, into the important central aria (lines 71–129).

The speaker prepares for this major instinctual utterance by setting the scene precisely in lines 55–70. Here we are placed in a posture for listening by exact descriptive images: the stars are glistening; the he-bird rests "All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake, / Down almost amid the slapping waves." It will be noticed that the mockingbird, conspicuously a creature of the land rather than the sea, is positioned closer to the sea as his final recognition of the actuality of his loss becomes more and more apparent to him. The "slapping waves" seem to transmit to the bird something very close to what, in lines 165–173, they transmit to the boy, who also, in his turn, must move closer to the sea for its intelligence to reach him. But although the bird is almost as close to the sea as the boy will be subsequently, the "key," the "clew" from the "liquid rims," does not reveal itself to the bird. In lines 61–70 the speaker tries to explain why he, of all people, is able to understand and "translate" the import of the bird's central elegy. "He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know": notice that the speaker does not know the meanings because he has also lost a lover (he is, we recall, "a little boy"); he knows the meanings for two other reasons. First, the bird's song of loss "tallies" naturally with the boy's sense of melancholy and with his search for his own coherence and identity; and second, the curious and sympathetic boy took pains to hear the song of the bird repeated all summer long; the song has worked on the boy through repetition—he has listened to it "more than once" (line 63) and "long and long" (line 68).

The bird's central aria exhibits its own self-contained rhetorical action. It begins in erotic reminiscence, proceeds to the extraction of a desperate hope from any quarter, and moves finally in total despair to a recognition of perpetual loss. The aria stands thus as a sort of significantly incomplete image of "Out of the Cradle" as a whole: not being human, the bird lacks the capacity for symbol-making; he ends in a puzzled awareness of both loss and the sea, but he is unable to combine idea with image to break through, as the speaker finally does, into an ecstatic awareness of total coherence and acceptance.

This aria begins, like the two brief anticipatory arias preceding, in apostrophe; and now it is the sea, rather than the sun or the wind, which is addressed. In lines 71–80 the bird dwells on the action of the surf in rhythmically soothing both itself and its opposite, the sand. The bird's design here is apparently to use the erotic surf-sand image as a pretext for indulging a joyful reminiscence of his own past erotic joys. This erotic meditation provides the bird with the motive for seeking his love again, and, in lines 79–80, he begs the night to reassure him that his love is indeed returning, is "that little black thing I see there in the white" of the breakers. After an excited and hopeful address (lines 81–85) to his absent mate, in which the bird assures his mate that he is still there, waiting, he turns to apostrophize the moon. The moon is somehow sympathetic with the bird's loss: it is seen as "heavy with unsatisfied love," as "low-hanging," "lagging," and, later, as "drooping." But despite its sympathy with the bird's predicament, the moon is silent and self-contained: it offers no "key" or "clew" to the bird. Here the image of the lost female as a dark spot against brightness is repeated: "What," the bird inquires of the moon, "is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?" Receiving no "clew" from the moon, the bird turns with an increasing anxiety to apostrophize both the land behind him and the stars overhead. They too, like the sun, wind, sea, and moon, are wordless and self-composed. They have no answers for a bird's inquiries. Moving now to consider the possibility that the fault is his rather than nature's, and that perhaps he is not singing loudly or clearly enough, the bird exhorts his own throat to "sound clearer," to "pierce the woods, the earth." And he next goes so far as to apostrophize his own songs—he exhorts them to trill ("shake out") correctly, as if he has now come to doubt even his own technical competence.

Lines 105–110 exhibit the bird desperately torn between a desire to listen for a possible response from his love and a desire not to stop singing lest his love miss him. He resolves this dilemma in lines 111–114 by deciding to maintain a "just sustain'd note," "a gentle call," so soft that he will be able to hear above it an answering song. But now that he has lowered his voice, he recognizes in lines 115–118 another difficulty: the trouble now is that his "just sustain'd note" will so closely resemble the whistling of the wind and the fluttering of the spray that its uniqueness in nature will be unrecognizable.

At line 119, the exhausted and now spiritless bird arrives at his final perception. He has begun by indulging, perhaps unwisely, erotic memories; he has proceeded by means of a series of apostrophes to seek help from natural phenomena; gradually doubting his own musical ability and fearing that the fault may lie in him rather than in the sea, the moon, or the land, he has even considered his own technical performance; and since none of these shifts has restored his love, he now droops in despair: "O darkness! O in vain!"

Turning away from hope, he perceives that his singing "all the night" has been useless. He thus closes his song with a bittersweet passage (lines 125–129) in which he reminds himself again and for the last time of his joyful past, now quite hopelessly disconnected from present and future. His quest for completeness, a quest which the listening boy can identify with his own, has ended in failure because he is a bird, not a man. Because, unlike the boy, he is unable to entertain transcendental paradoxes, his despair is complete. Joys and pains he is unable to reconcile into a totality: they remain to him two entirely opposed experiences. In line 127 he reveals his incapacity to come to grips with his loss: the five-times repeated "Loved!" looks wholly backwards in time—it needs to be completed by what the sea, a voice of eternity instead of time, utters in the similar line 173: "Death, death, death, death, death." The bird is trapped in time, and his vision of experience, although undeniably pathetic, is partial, merely particular, and thus ultimately horrifying.

When the speaker resumes his narration in lines 130–143, he returns to participial syntax. The bird, silenced finally by a total hopelessness, has stopped singing, but the contextual sounds persist ironically. The bird's song now echoes emptily among the sounds of the wind's whistling, the sea's angry moaning, and the sand's gentle rustling. The moon is still sadly drooping, "the face of the sea almost touching." The phenomena of nature are not "touching" each other now: they are discrete, isolated, cold. And everything in nature is now either sad, or angry and fierce. But the listening boy is now, surprisingly, ecstatic. Possessed of the metaphor-making faculty denied the bird, the boy at this moment finds himself beloved by nature, which has not even noticed the bird's outcries. To the boy, the waves seem lovingly to dally with his bare feet; the air dallies with his hair—and the love in his heart, "long pent," responds. His ears and then his soul "swiftly depositing" the meaning not only of the bird's song but of nature's failure to attend to it, he weeps with joy as he begins to perceive his own paradoxical relationship with the bird. On the one hand, the bird is his "dusky demon and brother," his genius and his poetic type. And yet, on the other hand, the boy's essence transcends the bird's, for the boy is not obliged by his own nature to cease his quest at the point of despair: he can "translate" despair into joy, moving out of time into eternity.

He now speaks (line 140) of a "trio," the members of which, as in Italian opera, have each sung simultaneously different but related subjects. The first member of the trio is the sea, which, far from being troubled by loss, is herself a figure of infinite loss. The second member of the trio is the bird, troubled by loss but unable to regard loss in relation to a larger whole. The third member of the trio is the boy, who as an agent of perception—that is, a maker of metaphors—is as far removed from the bird as the bird is from the sea, even though the bird remains his "brother" and even though the sea stands as "mother" to both. The boy's recognition of his own nature here prompts him to perceive his identity and his function: "Now in a moment," he says, "I know what I am for." He awakes as if from a dream of darkness and feels starting up within him "a thousand warbling echoes" of the song of the bird.

The address of the speaker shifts suddenly in line 144, and from here to line 149 the boy (or rather his "soul") delivers his first apostrophe—his first extravagant metaphor—of the poem. He thus reveals that he has now learned to "echo" (but not, we should notice, to reproduce) bird-song; that is, to sing lyrically and as if instinctually. The speaker's customary "natural" mode of discourse, narrative recitative, now begins to take on qualities of the bird's mode, apostrophic aria. The boy has learned from the bird's long aria how to receive into his songs sorrow and loss and solitude (that is, "the sweet hell within") as central themes. But he has also learned something more—he has learned a rhetorical technique for managing such themes, as his new syntactical and rhetorical practice reveals. From this point onward the "outsetting bard" practices what he has learned from the bird's way of singing: the "unknown want, the destiny of me" (line 157) proves to be the fruition of a technique of address as well as an increased sense of personal coherence and a newly discovered poetic subject matter.

Lines 144–164 thus operate through apostrophe. After addressing the "Demon or bird" ("demon" in the sense of "spirit"), the speaker turns to address himself: "O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating you." He then indulges in prophecy, and prophecy which, I think, has been sometimes misread:

> Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,
> Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me.

The speaker does not mean that he conceives of himself as a frustrated lover: we remember that, in the time-scheme of the past occasion, he is just a little boy. He means that he has discovered from the bird's song the way of rendering poetically (that is, through the device of "cries") the theme of unsatisfied love, taken as representative of a whole complex of themes accessible to the rhetorically sophisticated but quite inaccessible to "the peaceful child I was."

After the address to himself, ending in self-discovery and prophecy, the boy continues to exercise himself in his newly learned way of speaking. He apostrophizes the universe of natural appearances in general, seeking the "clew" which is still lurking in the night. Delighted with his success so far in extracting significance from natural particulars, the boy wants more; and what he wants now is one final "clew" which will lead him past the identity he has attained and which will carry him through to the goal of his quest: complete internal coherence within a completely coherent universe. Continuing (lines 160–162) to apostrophize the universe of natural particulars, the boy seeks one symbol which will serve as a "clew": "A word then, (for I will conquer it)." We may take the "it" here as referring to night as an emblem of obscurity and the absence of clear identity. And in lines 163–164 the boy moves on to perform the last apostrophe. He speaks now to the waves in a way which would have been impossible for him before learning from the bird the technique of addressing natural objects. He manages to ask of the waves the overwhelming question:

> Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea
> waves?
> Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Like the bird, the boy has learned how to address the sea; the sea did not respond to the bird, for the bird, unaware that the sea was anything more than its "mere first sight," did not seek the "clew." But because the boy seeks (that is, employs his human metaphorical power), the sea, even though it is the alien element, condescends to answer:

> Whereto answering, the sea,
> Delaying not, hurrying not,
> Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before
> daybreak,
> Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death.

And what is the knowledge of death a "clew" to? It is a clew to life and love, the end of the beginning which perpetually performs the completion of experience, uniting halves into wholes and thus providing a value higher than either life or death—the value, namely, resident in the conception of reality not as stasis but as process.

Line 170 reminds us of the "trio" in line 140, for it names the two other "singers" and distinguishes the sea from them: "Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd child's heart." The sea neither hurries like the bird nor hesitates like the boy: reconciling a hiss with a melody, it is harmonious, coherent, complete. The boy's total immersion in his ecstatic awareness of coherent process is brilliantly imaged in lines 171–173, where the sea is depicted

> . . . edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,
> Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly
> all over.

The boy's new knowledge surrounds and sustains him the way water does a swimmer.

In the final section (lines 174–183), which marks a return from past to present, the reconciliation of the primary dualisms is insisted upon. It is a passage perhaps as stunning technically as any Whitman ever wrote; we will have to arrive at *Four Quartets* before we encounter in reflective American poetry anything so brilliant in meter, in figure, and in lithe idiomatic precision. Even the management of the assonance bespeaks the most sophisticated calculation. Almost regardless of our will we are borne through the passage by the echoing long *e* sounds which begin in "demon" (line 175) and proceed through "me," "beach," "key," "sweetest," "creeping," "sweet," "sea," and "me." The initial "which" refers both to the antecedent "death" and to the whole experience "in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray beach":

> Which I do not forget,
> But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,
>
> . . . . .
>
> With the thousand responsive songs at random,
> My own songs awaked from that hour,
> And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
> The word of the sweetest song and all songs,
> That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
> (Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet
> garments, bending aside,)
> The sea whisper'd me.

The reconciliation between bird-song and man-song is fully effected by means of the "key"—the complete apprehension of death as a stage in organic process; this knowledge enables the human singer to transcend despair and to bring coherence into the apparently opposed conditions of life and death. As we are told in Section 45 of "Song of Myself,"

> Every condition promulges not only itself, it promulges what
> grows after and out of itself,
> And the dark hush promulges as much as any.

Although Whitman's curious warble is finished, the speaker is saying that nothing else ever is. The oppositions of joys and pains, ecstasy and despair, instinct and control, nature and art, are now ready to lie down together, each completing the other to bring forth a harmonious and satisfactory universe. At the end of the poem, the sea, imaged earlier as "the savage old mother" (line 141), has turned curiously benign: although she is undeniably old, indeed, eternal, she is now rocking an infant in its cradle, bending in her sweet garments, lisping and whispering now instead of moaning and crying. And this final figure, which Whitman added with consummate structural tact to the version of 1881, carries us back to the figure with which the poem began, the figure of the sea as itself an eternally rocking cradle. The final figure suggests the psychological reconciliation in the coherent person between his youth and his age: his cradled infancy and his maturity, his boyhood and his manhood, his innocence and his knowledge, have fused. Emerson defines "the lover of Nature" as "he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood." And from this kind of internal coherence springs a vision of an analogous, corresponding universe of coherent externals. Inner process corresponds with outer. As we find asserted in "A Song of the Rolling Earth," "I swear the earth shall surely be complete to him or her who shall be complete." In a famous setting not entirely different from that of "Out of the Cradle," Arnold finds consolation, if not ecstasy, in the continuing possibility of private human fidelities; but the speaker in our poem sings his "Ah, love, let us be true to one another!" not, characteristically, to a woman in a room but both to the boy he once was and to the whole universe of external forms. It is, as Samuel Johnson said of his marriage, "a love match on both sides." Having constructed a psychologically coherent personal history, and having attained to a universe which he has made coherent, the speaker in the poem is now prepared to render his vision in coherent poetic forms, for, as we have seen, "aria" and "recitative," representative of two opposed kinds of expression, the poem finally reconciles in a sort of "ensemble."

Glancing back over the poem, we now can see that all things in it come in pairs: we have a sun and a moon, a he-bird and a she-bird, a boy and a man, south and north, sand and sea, darkness and light, past tense and present tense, shadows and substances, love and death. All partake at the end in the process of reconciliation, which resembles the process by which, in an individual metaphor, the two parts interpenetrate to create a third thing. The behavior of the poem thus resembles one vast metaphor in the process of becoming: the dual but multiform terms of the great figure that is the poem lock at the end to admit both speaker and reader into a new reality. The final revelation occurs significantly at the light-in-darkness of dawn, an image of the reconciliation of the light and darkness which have opposed each other earlier in the poem. Whitman's command to his dualistic details, a command which the details obey cheerfully, is a version of E. M. Forster's epigraph to *Howards End:* "Only connect." And the details obey cheerfully because Whitman has contrived them so that they will obey. He does not, that is, find them on the beaches of Long Island and then catalogue them. He makes them up. The "key" which the boy seeks and finds in the poem will not, I think, admit us into any of the dark, winding corridors of Whitman's actual life. But the key does do something perhaps even better. It unlocks both for Whitman and for us the front door of the palace of art.

Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson

Allen Tate

Great poetry needs no special features of difficulty to make it mysterious. When it has them, the reputation of the poet is likely to remain uncertain. This is still true of Donne, and it is true of Emily Dickinson, whose verse appeared in an age unfavorable to the use of intelligence in poetry. Her poetry is not like any other poetry of her time; it is not like any of the innumerable kinds of verse written today. In still another respect it is far removed from us. It is a poetry of ideas, and it demands of the reader a point of view—not an opinion of the New Deal or of the League of Nations, but an ingrained philosophy that is fundamental, a settled attitude that is almost extinct in this eclectic age. Yet it is not the sort of poetry of ideas which, like Pope's, requires a point of view only. It requires also, for the deepest understanding, which must go beneath the verbal excitement of the style, a highly developed sense of the specific quality of poetry—a quality that most persons accept as the accidental feature of something else that the poet thinks he has to say. This is one reason why Miss Dickinson's poetry has not been widely read.

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There is another reason, and it is a part of the problem peculiar to a poetry that comes out of fundamental ideas. We lack a tradition of criticism. There were no points of critical reference passed on to us from a preceding generation. I am not upholding here the so-called dead-hand of tradition, but rather a rational insight into the meaning of the present in terms of some imaginable past implicit in our own lives: we need a body of ideas that can bear upon the course of the spirit and yet remain coherent as a rational instrument. We ignore the present, which is momently translated into the past, and derive our standards from imaginative constructions of the future. The hard contingency of fact invariably breaks these standards down, leaving us the intellectual chaos which is the sore distress of American criticism. Marxian criticism has become the latest disguise of this heresy.

Still another difficulty stands between us and Miss Dickinson. It is the failure of the scholars to feel more than biographical curiosity about her. We have scholarship, but that is no substitute for a critical tradition. Miss Dickinson's value to the research scholar, who likes historical difficulty for its own sake, is slight; she is too near to possess the remoteness of literature. Perhaps her appropriate setting would be the age of Cowley or of Donne. Yet in her own historical setting she is, nevertheless, remarkable and special.

Although the intellectual climate into which she was born, in 1830, had, as all times have, the features of a transition, the period was also a major crisis culminating in the war between the States. After that war, in New England as well as in the South, spiritual crises were definitely minor until the First World War.

Yet, a generation before the war of 1861–65, the transformation of New England had begun. When Samuel Slater in 1790 thwarted the British embargo on mill-machinery by committing to memory the whole design of a cotton spinner and bringing it to Massachusetts, he planted the seed of the "Western spirit." By 1825 its growth in the East was rank enough to begin choking out the ideas and habits of living that New England along with Virginia had kept in unconscious allegiance to Europe. To the casual observer, perhaps, the New England character of 1830 was largely an eighteenth-century character. But theocracy was on the decline, and industrialism was rising—as Emerson, in an unusually lucid moment, put it, "Things are in the saddle." The energy that had built the meeting-house ran the factory.

Now the idea that moved the theocratic state is the most interesting historically of all American ideas. It was, of course, powerful in seventeenth-century England, but in America, where the long arm of Laud could not reach, it acquired an unchecked social and political influence. The important thing to remember about the puritan theocracy is that it permeated, as it could never have done in England, a whole society. It gave final, definite meaning to life, the life of pious and impious, of learned and vulgar alike. It gave—and this is its significance for Emily Dickinson, and in only slightly lesser degree for Melville and Hawthorne—it gave an heroic proportion and a tragic mode to the experience of the individual. The history of the New England theocracy, from Apostle Eliot to Cotton Mather, is rich in gigantic intellects that broke down—or so it must appear to an outsider—in a kind of moral decadence and depravity. Socially we may not like the New England idea. Yet it had an immense, incalculable value for literature: it dramatized the human soul.

But by 1850 the great fortunes had been made (in the rum, slave, and milling industries), and New England became a museum. The whatnots groaned under the load of knick-knacks, the fine china dogs and cats, the pieces of Oriental jade, the chips off the leaning tower at Pisa. There were the rare books and the cosmopolitan learning. It was all equally displayed as the evidence of a superior culture. The Gilded Age had already begun. But culture, in the true sense, was disappearing. Where the old order, formidable as it was, had held all this personal experience, this eclectic excitement, in a comprehensible whole, the new order tended to flatten it out in a common experience that was not quite in common; it exalted more and more the personal and the unique in the interior sense. Where the old-fashioned puritans got together on a rigid doctrine, and could thus be individualists in manners, the nineteenth-century New Englander, lacking a genuine religious center, began to be a social conformist. The common idea of the Redemption, for example, was replaced by the conformist idea of respectability among neighbors whose spiritual disorder, not very evident at the surface, was becoming acute. A great idea was breaking up, and society was moving towards external uniformity, which is usually the measure of the spiritual sterility inside.

At this juncture Emerson came upon the scene: the Lucifer of Concord, he had better be called hereafter, for he was the light-bearer who could see nothing but light, and was fearfully blind. He looked around and saw the uniformity of life, and called it the routine of tradition, the tyranny of the theological idea. The death of Priam put an end to the hope of Troy, but it was a slight feat of arms for the doughty Pyrrhus; Priam was an old gentleman and almost dead. So was theocracy; and Emerson killed it. In this way he accelerated a tendency that he disliked. It was a great intellectual mistake. By it Emerson unwittingly became the prophet of a piratical industrialism, a consequence of his own transcendental individualism that he could not foresee. He was hoist with his own petard.

He discredited more than any other man the puritan drama of the soul. The age that followed, from 1865 on, expired in a genteel secularism, a mildly didactic order of feeling whose ornaments were Lowell, Longfellow, and Holmes. "After Emerson had done his work," says Mr. Robert Penn Warren, "any tragic possibilities in that culture were dissipated." Hawthorne alone in his time kept pure, in the primitive terms, the primitive vision; he brings the puritan tragedy to its climax. Man, measured by a great idea outside himself, is found wanting. But for Emerson man is greater than any idea and, being himself the Over-Soul, is innately perfect; there is no struggle because—I state the Emersonian doctrine, which is very slippery, in its extreme terms—because there is no possibility of error. There is no drama in human character because there is no tragic fault. It is not surprising, then, that after Emerson New England literature tastes like a sip of cambric tea. Its center of vision has disappeared. There is Hawthorne looking back, there is Emerson looking not too clearly at anything ahead: Emily Dickinson, who has in her something of both, comes in somewhere between.

With the exception of Poe there is no other American poet whose work so steadily emerges, under pressure of certain disintegrating obsessions, from the framework of moral character. There is none of whom it is truer to say that the poet *is* the poetry. Perhaps this explains the zeal of her admirers for her biography; it explains, in part at least, the gratuitous mystery that Mrs. Bianchi, a niece of the poet and her official biographer, has made of her life. The devoted controversy that Miss Josephine Pollitt and Miss Genevieve Taggard started a few years ago with their excellent books shows the extent to which the critics feel the intimate connection of her life and work. Admiration and affection are pleased to linger over the tokens of a great life; but the solution to the Dickinson enigma is peculiarly superior to fact.

The meaning of the identity—which we merely feel—of character and poetry would be exceedingly obscure, even if we could draw up a kind of Binet correlation between the two sets of "facts." Miss Dickinson was a recluse; but her poetry is rich with a profound and varied experience. Where did she get it? Now some of the biographers, nervous in the presence of this discrepancy, are eager to find her a love affair, and I think this search is due to a modern prejudice: we believe that no virgin can know enough to write poetry. We shall never learn where she got the rich quality of her mind. The moral image that we have of Miss Dickinson stands out in every poem; it is that of a dominating spinster whose very sweetness must have been formidable. Yet her poetry constantly moves within an absolute order of truths that overwhelmed her simply because to her they were unalterably fixed. It is dangerous to assume that her "life," which to the biographers means the thwarted love affair she is supposed to have had, gave to her poetry a decisive direction. It is even more dangerous to suppose that it made her a poet.

Poets are mysterious, but a poet when all is said is not much more mysterious than a banker. The critics remain spellbound by the technical license of her verse and by the puzzle of her personal life. Personality is a legitimate interest because it is an incurable interest, but legitimate as a personal interest only; it will never give up the key to anyone's verse. Used to that end, the interest is false. "It is apparent," writes Mr. Conrad Aiken, "that Miss Dickinson became a hermit by deliberate and conscious choice"—a sensible remark that we cannot repeat too often. If it were necessary to explain her seclusion with disappointment in love, there would remain the discrepancy between what the seclusion produced and the seclusion looked at as a cause. The effect, which is her poetry, would imply the whole complex of anterior fact, which was the social and religious structure of New England.

The problem to be kept in mind is thus the meaning of her "deliberate and conscious" decision to withdraw from life to her upstairs room. This simple fact is not very important. But that it must have been her sole way of acting out her part in the history of her culture, which made, with the variations of circumstance, a single demand upon all its representatives—this is of the greatest consequence. All pity for Miss Dickinson's "starved life" is misdirected. Her life was one of the richest and deepest ever lived on this continent.

When she went upstairs and closed the door, she mastered life by rejecting it. Others in their way had done it before; still others did it later. If we suppose—which is to suppose the improbable—that the love-affair precipitated the seclusion, it was only a pretext; she would have found another. Mastery of the world by rejecting the world was the doctrine, even if it was not always the practice, of Jonathan Edwards and Cotton Mather. It is the meaning of fate in Hawthorne: his people are fated to withdraw from the world and to be destroyed. And it is one of the great themes of Henry James.

There is a moral emphasis that connects Hawthorne, James, and

Miss Dickinson, and I think it is instructive. Between Hawthorne and James lies an epoch. The temptation to sin, in Hawthorne, is, in James, transformed into the temptation not to do the "decent thing." A whole world-scheme, a complete cosmic background, has shrunk to the dimensions of the individual conscience. This epoch between Hawthorne and James lies in Emerson. James found himself in the post-Emersonian world, and he could not, without violating the detachment proper to an artist, undo Emerson's work; he had that kind of intelligence which refuses to break its head against history. There was left to him only the value, the historic rôle, of rejection. He could merely escape from the physical presence of that world which, for convenience, we may call Emerson's world: he could only take his Americans to Europe upon the vain quest of something that they had lost at home. His characters, fleeing the wreckage of the puritan culture, preserved only their honor. Honor became a sort of forlorn hope struggling against the forces of "pure fact" that had got loose in the middle of the century. Honor alone is a poor weapon against nature, being too personal, finical, and proud, and James achieved a victory by refusing to engage the whole force of the enemy.

In Emily Dickinson the conflict takes place on a vaster field. The enemy to all those New Englanders was Nature, and Miss Dickinson saw into the character of this enemy more deeply than any of the others. The general symbol of Nature, for her, is Death, and her weapon against Death is the entire powerful dumb-show of the puritan theology led by Redemption and Immortality. Morally speaking, the problem for James and Miss Dickinson is similar. But her advantages were greater than his. The advantages lay in the availability to her of the puritan ideas on the theological plane.

These ideas, in her poetry, are momently assailed by the disintegrating force of Nature (appearing as Death) which, while constantly breaking them down, constantly redefines and strengthens them. The values are purified by the triumphant withdrawal from Nature, by their power to recover from Nature. The poet attains to a mastery over experience by facing its utmost implications. There is the clash of powerful opposites, and in all great poetry—for Emily Dickinson is a great poet—it issues in a tension between abstraction and sensation in which the two elements may be, of course, distinguished logically, but not really. We are shown our roots in Nature by examining our differences with Nature; we are renewed by Nature without being delivered into her hands. When it is possible for a poet to do this for us with the greatest imaginative comprehension, a possibility that the poet cannot himself create, we have the perfect literary situation. Only a few times in the history of English poetry has this situation come about, notably, the period between about 1580 and the Restoration. There was a similar age in New England from which emerged two talents of the first order—Hawthorne and Emily Dickinson.

There is an epoch between James and Miss Dickinson. But between her and Hawthorne there exists a difference of intellectual quality. She lacks almost radically the power to seize upon and understand abstractions for their own sake; she does not separate them from the sensuous illuminations that she is so marvelously adept at; like Donne, she *perceives abstraction* and *thinks sensation*. But Hawthorne was a master of ideas, within a limited range; this narrowness confined him to his own kind of life, his own society, and out of it grew his typical forms of experience, his steady, almost obsessed vision of man; it explains his depth and intensity. Yet he is always conscious of the abstract, doctrinal aspect of his mind, and when his vision of action and emotion is weak, his work becomes didactic. Now Miss Dickinson's poetry often runs into quasi-homiletic forms, but it is never didactic. Her very ignorance, her lack of formal intellectual training, preserved her from the risk that imperiled Hawthorne. She cannot reason at all. She can only *see*. It is impossible to imagine what she might have done with drama or fiction; for, not approaching the puritan temper and through it the puritan myth, through human action, she is able to grasp the terms of the myth directly and by a feat that amounts almost to anthropomorphism, to give them a luminous tension, a kind of drama, among themselves.

One of the perfect poems in English is "The Chariot," and it illustrates better than anything else she wrote the special quality of her mind. I think it will illuminate the tendency of this discussion:

Because I could not stop for death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility.

We passed the school where children played,
Their lessons scarcely done;
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound.

Since then 'tis centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity.*

If the word great means anything in poetry, this poem is one of the greatest in the English language. The rhythm charges with movement the pattern of suspended action back of the poem. Every image is precise and, moreover, not merely beautiful, but fused with the central idea. Every image extends and intensifies every other. The third stanza especially shows Miss Dickinson's power to fuse, into a single order of perception, a heterogeneous series: the children, the grain, and the setting sun (time) have the same degree of credibility; the first subtly preparing for the last. The sharp *gazing* before *grain* instills into nature a cold vitality of which the qualitative richness has infinite depth. The content of death in the poem eludes explicit definition. He is a gentleman taking a lady out for a drive. But note the restraint that keeps the poet from carrying this so far that it becomes ludicrous and incredible; and note the subtly interfused erotic motive, which the idea of death has presented to most romantic poets, love being a symbol interchangeable with death. The terror of death is objectified through this figure of the genteel driver, who is made ironically to serve the end of Immortality. This is the heart of the poem: she has presented a typical Christian theme in its final irresolution, without making any final statements about it. There is no solution to the problem; there can be only a presentation of it in the full context of intellect and feeling. A construction of the human will, elaborated with all the abstracting powers of the mind, is put to the concrete test of experience: the idea of immortality is confronted with the fact of physical disintegration. We are not told what to think; we are told to look at the situation.

The framework of the poem is, in fact, the two abstractions, mortality and eternity, which are made to associate in equality with the images: she sees the ideas, and thinks the perceptions. She did, of course, nothing of the sort; but we must use the logical distinctions, even to the extent of paradox, if we are to form any notion of this rare quality of mind. She could not in the proper sense think at all, and unless we prefer the feeble poetry of moral ideas that flourished in New England in the eighties, we must conclude that her intellectual deficiency contributed at least negatively to her great distinction. Miss Dickinson is probably the only Anglo-American poet of her century whose work exhibits the perfect literary situation—in which is possible the fusion of sensibility and thought. Unlike her contemporaries, she never succumbed to her ideas, to easy solutions, to her private desires.

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* Here Mr. Tate (whose essay was published in 1932) prints the poem as it appears in *Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Mabel Loomis Todd and T. W. Higginson (Boston, 1890). Many editors now use the version to be found in *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge, Mass., 1955).—Eds.

Philosophers must deal with ideas, but the trouble with most nineteenth-century poets is too much philosophy; they are nearer to being philosophers than poets, without being in the true sense either. Tennyson is a good example of this; so is Arnold in his weak moments. There have been poets like Milton and Donne, who were not spoiled for their true business by leaning on a rational system of ideas, who understood the poetic use of ideas. Tennyson tried to mix a little Huxley and a little Broad Church, without understanding either Broad Church or Huxley; the result was fatal, and what is worse, it was shallow. Miss Dickinson's ideas were deeply imbedded in her character, not taken from the latest tract. A conscious cultivation of ideas in poetry is always dangerous, and even Milton escaped ruin only by having an instinct for what in the deepest sense he understood. Even at that there is a remote quality in Milton's approach to his material, in his treatment of it; in the nineteenth century, in an imperfect literary situation where literature was confused with documentation, he might have been a pseudo-philosopher-poet. It is difficult to conceive Emily Dickinson and John Donne succumbing to rumination about "problems"; they would not have written at all.

Neither the feeling nor the style of Miss Dickinson belongs to the seventeenth century; yet between her and Donne there are remarkable ties. Their religious ideas, their abstractions, are momently toppling from the rational plane to the level of perception. The ideas, in fact, are no longer the impersonal religious symbols created anew in the heat of emotion, that we find in poets like Herbert and Vaughan. They have become, for Donne, the terms of personality; they are mingled with the miscellany of sensation. In Miss Dickinson, as in Donne, we may detect a singularly morbid concern, not for religious truth, but for personal revelation. The modern word is self-exploitation. It is egoism grown irresponsible in religion and decadent in morals. In religion it is blasphemy; in society it means usually that culture is not self-contained and sufficient, that the spiritual community is breaking up. This is, along with some other features that do not concern us here, the perfect literary situation.

II

PERSONAL REVELATION of the kind that Donne and Miss Dickinson strove for, in the effort to understand their relation to the world, is a feature of all great poetry; it is probably the hidden motive for writing. It is the effort of the individual to live apart from a cultural tradition that no longer sustains him. But this culture, which I now wish to discuss a little, is indispensable: there is a great deal of shallow nonsense in modern criticism which holds that poetry—and this is a half-truth that is worse than false—is essentially revolutionary. It is only indirectly revolutionary: the intellectual and religious background of an age no longer contains the whole spirit, and the poet proceeds to examine that background in terms of immediate experience. But the background is necessary; otherwise all the arts (not only poetry) would have to rise in a vacuum. Poetry does not dispense with tradition; it probes the deficiencies of a tradition. But it must have a tradition to probe. It is too bad that Arnold did not explain his doctrine, that poetry is a criticism of life, from the viewpoint of its background: we should have been spared an era of academic misconception, in which criticism of life meant a diluted pragmatism, the criterion of which was respectability. The poet in the true sense "criticizes" his tradition, either as such, or indirectly by comparing it with something that is about to replace it; he does what the root-meaning of the verb implies—he *discerns* its real elements and thus establishes its value, by putting it to the test of experience.

What is the nature of a poet's culture? Or, to put the question properly, what is the meaning of culture for poetry? All the great poets become the material of what we popularly call culture; we study them to acquire it. It is clear that Addison was more cultivated than Shakespeare; nevertheless Shakespeare is a finer source of culture than Addison. What is the meaning of this? Plainly it is that learning has never had anything to do with culture except instrumentally: the poet must be exactly literate enough to write down fully and precisely what he has to say, but no more. The source of a poet's true culture lies back of the paraphernalia of culture, and not all the historical activity of an enlightened age can create it.

A culture cannot be consciously created. It is an available source of ideas that are imbedded in a complete and homogeneous society. The poet finds himself balanced upon the moment when such a world is about to fall, when it threatens to run out into looser and less self-sufficient impulses. This world order is assimilated, in Miss Dickinson, as medievalism was in Shakespeare, to the poetic vision; it is brought down from abstraction to personal sensibility.

In this connection it may be said that the prior conditions for great poetry, given a great talent, may be reduced to two: the thoroughness of the poet's discipline in an objective system of truth, and his lack of consciousness of such a discipline. For this discipline is a number of fundamental ideas the origin of which the poet does not know; they give form and stability to his fresh perceptions of the world; and he cannot shake them off. This is his culture, and like Tennyson's God it is nearer than hands and feet. With reasonable certainty we unearth the elements of Shakespeare's culture, and yet it is equally certain—so innocent was he of his own resources—that he would not know what our discussion is about. He appeared at the collapse of the medieval system as a rigid pattern of life, but that pattern remained in Shakespeare what Shelley called a "fixed point of reference" for his sensibility. Miss Dickinson, as we have seen, was born into the equilibrium of an old and a new order. Puritanism could not be to her what it had been to the generation of Cotton Mather—a body of absolute truths; it was an unconscious discipline timed to the pulse of her life.

The perfect literary situation: it produces, because it is rare, a special and perhaps the most distinguished kind of poet. I am not trying to invent a new critical category. Such poets are never very much alike on the surface; they show us all the varieties of poetic feeling; and like other poets they resist all classification but that of temporary convenience. But, I believe, Miss Dickinson and John Donne would have this in common: their sense of the natural world is not blunted by a too rigid system of ideas; yet the ideas, the abstractions, their education or their intellectual heritage, are not so weak as to let their immersion in nature, or their purely personal quality, get out of control. The two poles of the mind are not separately visible; we infer them from the lucid tension that may be most readily illustrated by polar activity. There is no thought as such at all; nor is there feeling; there is that unique focus of experience which is at once neither and both.

Like Miss Dickinson, Shakespeare is without opinions; his peculiar merit is also deeply involved in his failure to think about anything; his meaning is not in the content of his expression; it is in the tension of the dramatic relations of his characters. This kind of poetry is at the opposite of intellectualism. (Miss Dickinson is obscure and difficult, but that is not intellectualism.) To T. W. Higginson, the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, who tried to advise her, she wrote that she had no education. In any sense that Higginson could understand, it was quite true. His kind of education was the conscious cultivation of abstractions. She did not reason about the world she saw; she merely saw it. The "ideas" implicit in the world within her rose up, concentrated in her immediate perception.

That kind of world at present has for us something of the fascination of a buried city. There is none like it. When such worlds exist, when such cultures flourish, they support not only the poet but all members of society. For, from these, the poet differs only in his gift for exhibiting the structure, the internal lineaments, of his culture by threatening to tear them apart: a process that concentrates the symbolic emotions of society while it seems to attack them. The poet may hate his age; he may be an outcast like Villon; but this world is always there as the background to what he has to say. It is the lens through which he brings nature to focus and control—the clarifying medium that concentrates his personal feeling. It is ready-made; he cannot make it; with it, his poetry has a spontaneity and a certainty of direction that, without it, it would lack. No poet could have invented the ideas of "The Chariot"; only a great poet could have found their imaginative equivalents. Miss Dickinson was a deep mind writing from a deep culture, and when she came to poetry, she came infallibly.

Infallibly, at her best; for no poet has ever been perfect, nor is Emily Dickinson. Her precision of statement is due to the directness with which the abstract framework of her thought acts upon its unorganized material. The two elements of her style, considered as point of view, are immortality, or the idea of permanence, and the physical process of death or decay. Her diction has two corresponding features: words of Latin or Greek origin and, sharply opposed to these, the concrete Saxon element. It is this verbal conflict that gives to her verse its high tension; it is not a device deliberately seized upon, but a feeling for language that senses out the two fundamental components of English and their metaphysical relation: the Latin for ideas and the Saxon for perceptions—the peculiar virtue of English as a poetic language.

Like most poets Miss Dickinson often writes out of habit; the style that emerged from some deep exploration of an idea is carried on as verbal habit when she has nothing to say. She indulges herself:

There's something quieter than sleep
Within this inner room!
It wears a sprig upon its breast,
And will not tell its name.

Some touch it and some kiss it,
Some chafe its idle hand;
It has a simple gravity
I do not understand!

While simple hearted neighbors
Chat of the "early dead,"
We, prone to periphrasis,
Remark that birds have fled!

It is only a pert remark; at best a superior kind of punning—one of the worst specimens of her occasional interest in herself. But she never had the slightest interest in the public. Were four poems or five published in her lifetime? She never felt the temptation to round off a poem for public exhibition. Higginson's kindly offer to make her verse "correct" was an invitation to throw her work into the public ring—the ring of Lowell and Longfellow. He could not see that he was tampering with one of the rarest literary integrities of all time. Here was a poet who had no use for the supports of authorship—flattery and fame; she never needed money.

She had all the elements of a culture that has broken up, a culture that on the religious side takes its place in the museum of spiritual antiquities. Puritanism, as a unified version of the world, is dead; only a remnant of it in trade may be said to survive. In the history of puritanism she comes between Hawthorne and Emerson. She has Hawthorne's matter, which a too irresponsible personality tends to dilute into a form like Emerson's; she is often betrayed by words. But she is not the poet of personal sentiment; she has more to say than she can put down in any one poem. Like Hardy and Whitman she must be read entire; like Shakespeare she never gives up her meaning in a single line.

She is therefore a perfect subject for the kind of criticism which is chiefly concerned with general ideas. She exhibits one of the permanent relations between personality and objective truth, and she deserves the special attention of our time, which lacks that kind of truth.

She has Hawthorne's intellectual toughness, a hard, definite sense of the physical world. The highest flights to God, the most extravagant metaphors of the strange and the remote, come back to a point of casuistry, to a moral dilemma of the experienced world. There is, in spite of the homiletic vein of utterance, no absract speculation, nor is there a message to society; she speaks wholly to the individual experience. She offers to the unimaginative no riot of vicarious sensation; she has no useful maxims for men of action. Up to this point her resemblance to Emerson is slight: poetry is a sufficient form of utterance, and her devotion to it is pure. But in Emily Dickinson the puritan world is no longer self-contained; it is no longer complete; her sensibility exceeds its dimensions. She has trimmed down its supernatural proportions; it has become a morality; instead of the tragedy of the spirit there is a commentary upon it. Her poetry is a magnificent personal confession, blasphemous and, in its self-revelation, its honesty, almost obscene. It comes out of an intellectual life towards which it feels no moral responsibility. Cotton Mather would have burnt her for a witch.

Mark Twain

The Relation between Point of View and Style in the Works of Mark Twain

JOHN C. GERBER

UNTIL 1869, when he published *Innocents Abroad*, Twain brought out only one piece that is still widely read, "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." It seems no coincidence that this is the only substantial piece in this period in which the points of view are both detached and sharply restricted. As narrator of the frame element Twain plays the part of an elegant, educated, solemn ass who can't see anything out of the way even in searching for a minister in Angel's Camp. As Simon Wheeler, narrator of the inner element, he plays the role of an equally solemn character, but this time one who is uneducated. Both roles were well known to Twain. The first he had seen played by Artemus Ward in his Virginia City lectures.[1] The second he knew from experience with

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[1] In this connection it should be remembered that "The Jumping Frog" first came out as a letter to Ward. The letter form was inconsequential and was later dropped, but thinking about the story originally as a letter to Ward must have influenced Twain in his selection of narrators.

SOURCE: *Reprinted from* Style in Prose Fiction: English Institute Essays, 1958 *(New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 144–66, by permission of the publisher. Footnotes have been renumbered.*

a long line of garrulous old codgers from his own Uncle John Quarles of Florida, Missouri, to Ben Coon of Calaveras County, from whom Twain says he got the frog story itself. Furthermore, he had seen the same combination of narrators used effectively in the works of such Southwestern yarnspinners as T. B. Thorpe and George W. Harris. The result is a happy consistency in the style of each narrator and an engaging contrast between the two styles.

Both narrators give the impression of addressing the reader directly —one assuming that he is a reader and the other that he is a listener— but there the likeness ends. The narrator of the frame story is literary, formal, and dull. He even indulges in such expressions as "and I hereunto append the result." Simon Wheeler, on the other hand, speaks in the vernacular. And in his long drawling sentences we encounter for the first time that deceptive casualness of Twain's. Seemingly Wheeler is simply rattling on about the infamous Jim Smiley, giving details as they occur to him. Actually his speech is carefully manipulated for the purpose of climax, and the style supports this arrangement. As the story proceeds the diction becomes more colorful and the figures of speech more numerous and more picturesque. Increasingly one gets the sense not only of the fact of the experience but of its especial quality, witness the frog in the last third of the account as it "snakes" a fly off the counter, flops on the floor again "as solid as a gob of mud," and falls to "scratching the side of his head with his hind foot as indifferent as if he hadn't no idea he'd been doin' any more'n any frog might do." Dialogue, moreover, is introduced in this last third, the shorter rhythms of Jim Smiley and the stranger breaking into and keeping Wheeler's longer rhythms from becoming tedious. Colorful and imaginative, though not grotesquely so, Simon Wheeler's talk is one of Twain's finest stylistic achievements.

In the seven years after "The Jumping Frog" Twain busied himself primarily with travel writing: twenty-five letters to the Sacramento *Union* about his experiences in the Sandwich Islands, twenty-six letters to the *Alta California* about his trip across the Nicaraguan Peninsula and back east, fifty-three letters to the *Alta* plus a few to the New York *Tribune* and the *Herald* about his trip to the Holy Land, and finally two books based in part on these letters, *Innocents Abroad* (1869) and *Roughing It* (1872). Since the relation between point of view and style is substantially the same in all of these works—and in subsequent travel books also—I shall confine this discussion to the first of the books, *Innocents Abroad.*

Twain's point of view in *Innocents* is fundamentally that of the letter writer, and the style reflects the letter writer's sense of intimacy with his reader. Twain refers to himself as "I," to his party as "we," and occasionally to the reader as "you." The sentences are primarily simple or compound; the diction is familiar; the comparisons, both literal and figurative, are taken from everyday life; and there is an astonishing profusion of questions and exclamations. Such, at least, is one's first impression. Actually, however, the situation is not nearly so simple. The point of view of the letter writer is a loose, ill-defined one that imposes few restrictions and almost no psychological distance upon Twain. On the contrary, it allows him within its generous confines to do a variety of things or, if you will, play a variety of roles, changing his cap as the spirit moves him. On occasion, for example, he is simply the purveyor of information; at other times he is the on-the-spot observer, the satirist, the humorous raconteur, and the amiable idiot. Since each of these roles varies in its demands, each exerts its own special pressure upon the style. The result is an almost wild profusion of styles despite the basic colloquialism.

As a purveyor of information Twain is easily at his dullest. Aping the stolid, unimaginative approach of the typical guidebook writer, he delivers himself of his facts with the same flatness. Even worse, he uses the same clichés and absurd rhetorical flourishes. We are treated, for instance, to short accounts of the "stalwart Bedouins of the desert" and the "stately Moors, proud of a history that goes back to the night of time." Venetian fleets, we learn, used to bring back "products of every clime," and one portion of Notre Dame Cathedral is "suggestive of the quaint fashions of ancient times." To Twain's credit, however, it should be said that he does occasionally try to spice up his guidebook style with colloquialisms and homely contrasts. Thus, though the Temple of Jupiter at Baalbec is "a wonder of architectural beauty and grandeur," the blocks used in its construction are about as long as "three street cars."

When Twain assumes the role of on-the-spot observer he employs a sharper focus, and his style livens up. The results can best be seen in the colorful descriptions of such places as Flores, Tangiers, and Lake Como. Even in these, however, the focus is still not so sharp as it might be, for there is a strong tendency to view the material in the conventional, two-dimensional way. In less noteworthy passages the wording is frequently too general (the water of the Blue Grotto is described as "ravishing" and "superb"); often the figures of speech are incongruous (from the eaves to the comb of the roof the curved marble beams of Milan cathedral stretch "like the fore-and-aft braces of a steamboat");

and sometimes the diction is almost appalling (the catacombs of the Capuchin Convent are "upholstered" by the bones of four thousand monks).

Twain never remains the on-the-spot observer very long without slipping into the role of satirist. This is the role that affords him the least detachment of any. For Twain is too emotional, too contradictory in his thinking to be able to work as a satirist should in a controlled manner from firm premises. As a result he protests too much, as though the police siren were a substitute for the rapier. His words become overcharged with feeling, his details are exaggerated, he resorts repeatedly to the silliest kind of parody and the most obvious kind of sarcasm and invective; and over all there is a general straining for effect that calls attention to itself instead of to the subject matter. In Italy, for example, he cannot restrain his sarcasm in writing about the "dead and damned Medicis" who, as he says, "had their trivial, forgotten exploits on land and sea pictured out in grand frescoes . . . with the Saviour and the Virgin throwing bouquets to them out of the clouds, and the Deity himself applauding from his throne in Heaven!" Bored and irritated by the Mosque of Santa Sophia, he describes it as the "rustiest barn in heathendom" and claims that he got so stuck up in it on "a complication of gums, slime, and general corruption" that he wore out two thousand bootjacks getting his shoes off that night. In Galilee he becomes exasperated with the indifference of adults to the health of their children, and slaps out these almost nauseating images:

> Yesterday we met a woman riding on a little jackass, and she had a little child in her arms; honestly, I thought the child had goggles on as we approached, and I wondered how its mother could afford so much style. But when we drew near, we saw that the goggles were nothing but a camp meeting of flies assembled around each of the child's eyes, and at the same time there was a detachment prospecting its nose. (Vol. II, chap. 18)

Twain himself once said that he could never be a good satirist because he felt too deeply. There is much truth in the remark.

When Twain shifts from satire to humorous storytelling, his style undergoes an almost dramatic change as the result of the narrower focus and the increased detachment that the role of raconteur affords him. The details are more specific and the incidents far better shaped for climax. Many of the stories are adaptations of old anecdotes, but the best are from his own experience: making a fool of the Genoese guide, taking a Turkish bath, and betting an Arab he can't go from the top of the pyramid of Cheops to the top of the pyramid of Cephron and back again in nine minutes. When his role as storyteller offers him sufficient psychological distance he even slips into understatement. Here is the climax of the story in which he claims as a boy to have seen a corpse by the moonlight in his father's office.

> I went away from there. I do not say that I went away in any sort of hurry, but I simply went—that is sufficient. I went out of the window, and I carried the sash along with me. I did not need the sash, but it was handier to take it than it was to leave it, and so I took it. I was not scared, but I was considerably agitated. (Vol. I, chap. 18)

The simplicity of these sentences and words—most of the words are monosyllables—is worth comparing with the gaudy rhetoric so characteristic of the satirical passages. Incidentally, the fact that this quietly effective style occurs in a passage where Twain is temporarily assuming the point of view of a boy should not be overlooked.

The role of the amiable idiot is the most restricted one that Twain plays in *Innocents Abroad*. As the idiot Twain pretends to believe everything that is told him, no matter how preposterous. More than that, he displays anxiety that the reader believe it too. The result is an earnest, solemn, and still effective style quite in conflict with the silly evidence and absurd logic.

It may be contended that Twain is not playing different roles in *Innocents Abroad* but simply changing his attitude and techniques with the material. There is something to such a contention since the material to a certain extent does affect Twain's personal involvement, scenery for example tending to leave him relatively detached and the sight of human depravity tending to engage his strongest emotions. But this is not the whole story, for he views the same kind of material in different ways. And besides, certain of the roles Twain plays are impossible to conceive of as merely moods or shifts in attitude. No author can be as shrewd as Twain is in some passages and then as incredibly stupid as he is in others unless he is shifting his role as narrator.

II

FROM 1873 to 1884 Twain's most important works dealt in part or in whole with the Mississippi valley: *The Gilded Age* (1873), "Old Times on the Mississippi" (1875; later enlarged into *Life on the Mississippi*, 1883), *Tom Sawyer* (1876), and *Huckleberry Finn* (1885). Taken in chronological order these works offer a four-step progression toward the detached and sharply restricted point of view of the boy, the point of view that results in Twain's most brilliant stylistic achievement.

In those parts of *The Gilded Age* which he wrote, Twain gains detachment by shifting to the viewpoint of the omniscient author. And in the several passages where he carefully restricts his focus, the writing is comparable with his best.

Not all of the effects of third-person narration are helpful to the style. Rather clearly Twain in the opening chapter is fighting the distance enforced by this point of view, for he tries to retain the colloquial intimacy of first-person writing by referring to the reader as "you" and to himself as "we." Apparently, however, he soon discovers the awkwardness of this effort and drops the attempt. In its place he adopts a bizarre informality achieved by italics, exclamations, asides to the reader in brackets, soliloquies addressed by characters to the reader, dialogue set up in play form, and even a discussion with the reader over the merits of two possible denouements. The shift to the third person also brings him more clearly under the influence of the sentimental novelists. Like them he begins referring to his readers as "our readers" and to a character as "our hero." And some of his scenes for what Huck calls "tears and flapdoodle" would do credit to Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth herself.

Yet on the whole the style of Twain's portions of *The Gilded Age* is superior to that of his travel books. For one thing it is more consistent. The sudden jumps from expository to satirical to narrative writing and back again are neither so frequent nor so jarring. For another, the satiric effects are better shaped and sustained. To be sure, the satire is still flamboyant—maybe more so than before—and the same devices are exploited. But with Twain not so much in evidence and his personal feelings not so much a topic of discussion, the thrust of the satire is less diffuse. There is nothing in the travel books, it seems to me, so devastating as the trial of Laura Hawkins, the repudiation by the Senate of Senator Noble, or even the speech by that arch-scoundrel, Senator Dilworthy, before the Sunday School of Cattleville.

Twain's greatest stylistic achievement in *The Gilded Age*, however, is the talk of Colonel Beriah Sellers. For the purpose of this argument it is important to notice that Colonel Sellers's best talk is in the early Hawkeye scenes where his listener is the youthful Washington Hawkins, and that in these scenes Twain as omniscient author has moved into the mind of Hawkins. At best this is no more than a tentative step toward surrendering to the sharply restricted viewpoint of the boy, but even this tentative step produces brilliant results.

In the seven pieces sent to Howells for the *Atlantic* in 1875 and entitled "Old Times on the Mississippi" Twain returns to first-person narration, but under circumstances that are much more auspicious than those that prevailed in the travel accounts. His function as narrator in the *Atlantic* pieces is obviously clearer to him and more restricted: he is the raconteur reminiscing about his days of piloting. The lapse of time since his pilot days provides a distance he does not ordinarily have in the travel works, and the material is familiar and close to his heart. It is not surprising, therefore, that in over-all quality "Old Times" is far better than the travel works. Indeed, some passages are among his best stylistic efforts, especially those in which Twain identifies himself with and partly submits to the limitations of a boy's point of view.

This partial submission is apparent first in the opening chapter entitled "A Boy's Ambition," in which Twain tells of the Hannibal of his youth, of the contrast between the town as it usually was and the town when a steamer arrived. It also occurs in the passages dealing with the adventures of the cub pilot. In these Twain is presumably writing about himself, but, as many have observed, the cub pilot of "Old Times" is a far younger and greener youth than Twain would have been. Actually Twain was close to twenty-two when he asked Horace Bixby to "learn" him the river. He was probably as sophisticated about the river and river boats as any neophyte pilot ever was. But the cub pilot of "Old Times" is so naïve he doesn't know he has to stand a regular watch, he is ignorant about fast and slow water, and he thinks Bixby points out landmarks just to be sociable. Lively and curious, he is nevertheless the veriest of greenhorns and cannot plausibly be more than sixteen, if he is even that.

What Twain does in each of these passages is to begin with his own point of view as author; then he moves into the boy's mind, reporting what he sees and hears, his reactions, and occasionally his motives; and finally he returns to the authorial point of view as the incident or passage comes to an end. As a matter of fact, his attempt to recover the boy's point of view is even more substantial than this account suggests, for in narrating each adventure he confines himself largely to the stuff of experience that would attract the boy. The adult commentary he saves for the transitional passages or for separate chapters.

The style of the narrative passages is fresh and pictorial, with the rhythms adapted to the tension of the incident. This is true not only of the parts (such as the sharp concrete detailing, the use of technical river terms, and the rendering of river talk) but also of the over-all effect, which suggests at once the wonder, the humor, and the dangers of piloting. Some of this writing achieves an extraordinary vividness and economy.

> Behind other islands we found wretched little farms, and wretcheder little log-cabins; there were crazy rail fences sticking a foot or two above the water, with one or two jeans-clad, chills-racked, yellow-faced male miserables roosting on the top-rail, elbows on knees, jaws in hand, grinding tobacco and discharging the results at floating chips through crevices left by lost teeth; while the rest of the family and the few farm animals were huddled together in an empty wood-flat riding at her moorings close at hand. (chap. II)

Those sections of "Old Times" written from the grown-up's point of view, while chatty, are much less vigorously executed. Even so, they are stylistically superior to most of the chapters added in 1883 to make up *Life on the Mississippi.* In these later portions, largely the result of a trip back to the Mississippi in 1882, we are right back among the travel books. Again writing in the first person without any basic restriction, Twain changes his style with his purpose or pose of the moment. The writing is at its best when he has somebody else tell a story, as in Huck's account of the visit to the raft or the "handsome man's" account of the Darnell-Watson feud. It is at its worst in the dreary historical and geographical disquisitions at the beginning and the guidebook writing at the end. Indeed this latter apparently gets so tedious even for Twain that he calls on an old gentleman who gets on board at LaCrosse to continue the account by delivering a travelogue plagiarized from a railroad advertising folder. Then Twain shamelessly ridicules the folder's style, though its fancy rhetoric is no worse than what he himself has been using. Even a set description of the Mississippi, as Leo Marx has pointed out,[2] is little more than a "pretty picture" described in soft, conventional terms. It is not the Mississippi itself, therefore, that seems to stir Twain's genius. It is the Mississippi seen with the fresh, detached, finely focused vision of a boy.

In *Tom Sawyer* Twain takes another step toward such a viewpoint. To be sure, he continues to write as the grown-up. But the grown-up point of view in *Tom Sawyer* is much less of a controlling force than it is in "Old Times." Partly this is because the shift to third-person narration makes it more implicit than explicit. More fundamentally, however, it is because Twain becomes more interested in Tom than he ever was in his cub pilot, and hence more eager to explore Tom's point of view. In effect, he partly surrenders himself to Tom or (to extend T. S. Eliot's notion of Twain as a combination of Tom and Huck) to the Tom in himself. What we have in *Tom Sawyer*, then, is a reasonably stable blend throughout the book of the two points of view, the adult's and the boy's. The style is clearly the product of this blend.

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[2] "The Pilot and the Passenger: Landscape Conventions and the Style of *Huckleberry Finn*," *American Literature*, XXVIII (May, 1956), 129–46. I am indebted also to this article for subsequent remarks on landscape description in *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn.*

Much of the writing suggests that Twain is conscientiously attempting to realize the boy's vitality and directness, his careful observation, his imagination and love of display. Evidence for this intention can be found particularly in the much higher proportion of concrete material than we have seen before—and not only in the proportion of such material but in its quality as well. The details, taken as a whole, are more sharply observed, and the scenes begin to assume a third dimension. Perhaps one can see the influence of Tom's point of view, also, in the increasing interest in dialogue and in the constant manipulation of material for climax or "effects." Certainly, it seems to me, one can see it in the sentences, which have a livelier forward propulsion achieved by increased simplicity, by the brevity of the transitions, and by an emphasis almost like a beat on the main verbs.

But there is much in the style of *Tom Sawyer* that still reflects the grown-up. It is the adult mind that is responsible for words like *cogitate*, *pariah*, *fillup*, and *hypercritical*, for generalizations about the boys, for tags like "these curiously inconsistent pirates," and for the fun poked at the girls' compositions. It is Twain, the grown-up author, too, who is responsible for the continuing tendency to see phenomena in terms of clichés ("eaten up with envy," "perennial bliss"), to personify nature ("the marvel of Nature shaking off sleep and going to work unfolded itself to the musing boy"), and to sentimentalize (see almost any scene involving Aunt Polly). Finally, and more to its credit, it is the grown-up point of view that is responsible for the gentle and amiable irony which suffuses the book and gives it its dominant tone.

When he first saw the manuscript of *Tom Sawyer* Howells wrote to Twain, advising him to treat the book explicitly as a boy's story. "Grown-ups," he said, "will enjoy it just as much if you do; and if you should put it forth as a study of boy character from the grown-up point of view, you give the wrong key to it."[3] Mrs. Clemens agreed with Howells, and of course so did Twain. As a result, Twain toned down a satirical passage or two and lopped off what he had meant to be the last chapter. But the advice came too late to affect the book fundamentally. And so it remains only a partial attempt to catch the boy's point of view. The full attempt comes in the book he started immediately after completing *Tom Sawyer* but did not complete until eight years later: *Huckleberry Finn.*

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[3] *Mark Twain's Letters*, ed. by Albert B. Paine (New York, 1917), I, 266.

III

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DECISION Mark Twain makes in beginning to write *Huckleberry Finn* is to have Huck tell the story. By this one decision he provides himself with a point of view that offers both the curbs and the detachment that his imagination needs for its best efforts. Almost magically it discourages him from doing the things he does badly and encourages him to do the things he does best. What is most important is not simply that Huck is a boy, though that is important; it is the kind of boy that Huck is.

Huck is a serious boy. From the very first, Twain makes him the straight, almost solemn reporter, with little or no sense of humor. Fog on the river, Pap's drunkenness, Miss Watson's piety, and the Royal Nonesuch, these are all solemn facts of life to Huck, no one of them to be regarded as less serious or more trivial than another. His own statements he takes as equally solemn facts, no matter how ludicrous they may be to the reader. He can report with sober admiration that Uncle Silas Phelps "never charged nothing for his preaching, and it was worth it too." This is the poker-face style elevated and made sincere.

Having created such a character as narrator, Twain can hardly use him for his usual plunges into Washoe-type humor. Huck, who in a sense becomes stronger than Twain, won't be a party to such foolishness, though he is willing to report it as he hears it from others. So Twain is forced either to tone down his exaggerations and burlesques or to parcel them out to other characters. He does both, and in either case they get toned down, because in parceling them out he causes them to become revelations of character as well as means of evoking laughter. Consider, for example, what happens to an old Western chestnut as it gets told by Huck:

> . . . I've always reckoned that looking at the new moon over your left shoulder is one of the carelessest and foolishest things a body can do. Old Hank Bunker done it once and bragged about it; and in less than two years he got drunk and fell off of the shot-tower, and spread himself out so that he was just a kind of layer, as you may say; and

> they slid him edgeways between two barn doors for a coffin, and buried him so, so they say, but I didn't see it. Pap told me. But anyway it all come of looking at the moon that way, like a fool. (chap. 10)

Here the story becomes in part a revelation of Pap's character. More than that, as filtered through Huck's consciousness—his worry over new moons and his concern that the implausible details not be attributed to him—the original hilarity gets transmuted into something almost tender. Nothing of this sort has happened before, even in *Tom Sawyer*.

In like manner Huck's simplicity forces a new subtlety on Twain's satire. (I use the term *simplicity* here to indicate what is possibly more accurately suggested by the expression "the folk mind": a mind which is at once limited in knowledge and inept in abstract speculation but which is still deeply and profoundly aware of those elementary principles which give life meaning and make it tolerable.) Patently Huck does not know enough about politics, economics, and such to serve as satirist. What is more, he would make an implausible one even if properly informed since his inclination is to accept life rather than to denounce it. Substantially, therefore, the method of direct satire is closed to Twain.

But the indirect method is richly open and Twain makes the most of it. He gives to Huck those simple folk insights which in the end are the basis of his own mature reflection. Like Twain, Huck values what is useful, what is comfortable, and what is kindly. There is an obvious falsity about attaching grand labels to Huck, but it may be worth noticing that bundled up in him are the most elementary principles of utilitarianism, hedonism, and humanitarianism, and that when these principles clash the humanitarian principle prevails. Thus in Huck Twain has created a character perfectly equipped for direct or implied satire. Huck's standards are so uncomplicated and so indisputably praiseworthy that his very presence becomes a rebuke to conventional values and behavior. His practicality makes Tom's flights of fancy completely ridiculous; his hedonism makes the materialism of the Mississippi valley seem petty and futile; and his humanitarianism makes the mores and institutions of his time seem unspeakably hypocritical and cruel. To achieve his satirical intent in *Huckleberry Finn*, therefore, Twain need only show Huck acting in accord with his principles.

The most readily apparent effect on the style of this shift to indirect satire is that the narrative flow is no longer repeatedly interrupted for ridicule or denunciation. When it *is* interrupted, as when Twain stops to burlesque the artistic accomplishments of Emmeline Grangerford, there is still a general relevance. The rhetoric of direct satire which is inappropriate to Huck is either dropped, toned down, or put into the mouths of other characters, like Colonel Sherburn, where (as with the humor) it becomes primarily a revelation of character. In short, because of Huck's nature the satire, like the humor, becomes more restrained, more subtly contrived, and in the end more compelling.

Seeing the world through Huck's eyes also forces Twain into a more consistently pictorial style than he has used before. Huck is a boy, as every reader knows, of remarkable sensory perception. His concern is primarily with the facts of experience and not with generalizations drawn from the facts. And his mind, largely uncluttered with adult preconceptions, sees every experience as something fresh and new. It sees it realistically, too, for Huck is just as aware of the dangers as he is of the beauties. As Edgar M. Branch has put it, "Sensuous delight and apprehension are the twin overtones of his perception." [4] Such a viewpoint forces upon Twain an undeviating concern with the specific and concrete. The result is a style in which—and I do not exaggerate—almost every subject has a concrete referent and in which the verbs are exploited for their connotative power even more spectacularly than before. Notice a few of these verbs: "It looked late and it *smelt* late. . . . They *swarmed* up in front of Sherburn's palings. . . . The racket stopped and the wave *sucked* back. . . . The crowd *washed* back sudden and then *broke* all apart and went tearing off every which way."

Whatever other effects Huck has on Twain's style, however, easily the most important is that he forces Twain into the vernacular. Having Huck tell the story in anything but his own dialect would be preposterous.

What strikes one first about the dialect in *Huckleberry Finn*, I suppose, is its colloquial authenticity. This is, of course, no accident. Twain had an extraordinary ear for dialect and had been practicing with it in writing, if we want to be literal, ever since he sent in his first piece to Shillaber's *Carpet-Bag* in 1852. As he composed in dialect, he frequently spoke many of the lines over and over until he was quite sure that he had them right. The result in *Huckleberry Finn* is that he not only discriminates between dialects but between modifications of the same dialect. And within the speech of a single character he indicates sound differences due to stress and the position in the sentence. Just as important, he catches the drawling rhythms of his characters with uncanny effectiveness. The sentences are the shortest that he uses anywhere. About half of them in the narrative passages begin with the subject. The great majority of the others begin with words that have primarily a coordinating effect, such as *and, but, so, then, well,* and *anyways.* Fewer than one-tenth begin with an introductory clause or phrase, and most of these are phrases indicating time or place. Very rarely do sentences in dialogue begin with an introductory clause on phrase, though a number begin with nonsense words like *why* and *well* or with imperative verbs.

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[4] *The Literary Apprenticeship of Mark Twain* (Urbana, Ill., 1950), p. 209.

What must be clear is that Twain's rhythms are dependent primarily upon parallelism—parallelism of sentences as well as of elements within the sentence. He regulates tempo by varying the length of the elements and the complexity of the parallelism itself. In so doing he not only effects a difference in tempo between dialogue and narrative but a difference within the narrative itself. George Mayberry has made a detailed analysis of Huck's description of the circus and has discovered that the sentence rhythm is adapted to the gait of the horses and the activities of the performers. The sentence elements first come in twos, then in threes; then there is a quick acceleration to a climax followed by a drop to a spondaic ending.[5]

Although the writing of *Huckleberry Finn* has an authentic colloquial ring, it is not simply the recording of actual talk. Twain himself, in writing to Edward Bok, remarked on the difference between writing and speaking: "The moment 'talk' is put into print you recognize that it is not what it was when you heard it; you perceive that an immense something has disappeared from it. That is its soul." What is left, he continues, is "a pallid, stiff, and repulsive cadaver." [6] No one would call Huck's talk cadaverous. It is casual, to be sure, but its casualness is so heightened that some are willing to call it folk poetry. This almost magical blend of the casual and the poetic, which avoids flatness on the one hand and mannered intensity on the other, is easier to illustrate than to describe. In the following passage, however, we can see at least some of the elements that make the blend possible.

> Once or twice of a night we would see a steamboat slipping along in the dark, and now and then she would belch a whole world of sparks up out of her chimbleys, and they would rain down in the river and look awful pretty; then she would turn a corner and her lights would wink out and her pow-wow shut off and leave the river still again; and by and by her waves would get to us a long time after she was gone and joggle the raft a bit, and after that you wouldn't hear nothing for you couldn't tell how long, except maybe frogs or something. (chap. 19)

Pushing the style toward the poetic are elements like these: the richly suggestive imagery, the connotative verbs, the economy of statement, the combination of introductory adverbial expressions and carefully molded parallelisms which create a slow, sustained, and quiet rhythm; and the over-all unity of effect which is so appropriate to the material. Holding the style to the casual are elements like these: the semi-local idioms, the phonetic spelling and the mistake in grammar, the shift from "we" to "you"; and, especially, such imprecise expressions as "whole world of sparks," "awful pretty," and "except maybe frogs or something."

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[5] "Reading and Writing," *New Republic*, CX (May 1, 1944), 608.

[6] *Mark Twain's Letters*, II, 504.

In forcing Twain to find dialect locutions Huck causes him to abandon his bookish expressions. The "pretty" wording of the conventional nature description, beginning to die out in *Tom Sawyer*, now disappears altogether. Twain now observes through Huck and reports what he sees in Huck's words, not in the words of a chromo lover. Happily one misses, too, the hackneyed phrasing that has to some degree blunted the style of all Twain's books up to this one. Huck's dialect simply will not accommodate the old clichés. And the "soft" wording of the sentimental scenes almost disappears. In *Tom Sawyer*, Tom, peeking in on grieving Aunt Polly, hears her pray for him "touchingly" and "appealingly." He "lingers" over her while she is asleep and finally bends and kisses her "faded lips." When Huck says good-bye to Mary Jane Wilks, however, about all that happens is that his eyes "water a little." Even when she promises to pray for him, he reacts admiringly but nonsentimentally:

> Pray for me! I reckoned if she knowed me she'd take a job that was more nearer her size. But I bet she done it, just the same—she was that kind. She had the grit to pray for Judas if she took the notion—there warn't no backdown to her, I judge. You may say what you want to, but in my opinion she had more sand in her than any girl I ever see; in my opinion she was just full of sand. (chap. 28)

There is no need in this paper to get tangled in the controversy over whether the last ten chapters contribute to the value of the book or lessen it. There is the possibility, however, that one point about these chapters might be relevant here. *Huckleberry Finn* is a modified frame story, with Tom the major character in the first three chapters and the last ten and Huck the major character in the large central portion. Technically the point of view does not change since Huck tells the entire story. But in effect it exerts less control over Twain in the frame elements where Tom, as the focal point, makes it relatively easy for Twain to carry the story into parody. Likewise the style *per se* does not change, but it is not so impressive in the frame elements since it is expended there upon material of less consequence.

We hardly need go back and labor the main point again. Huck, at least in the central part of the book, provides Twain with precisely the kind of detached and limited point of view that his imagination needs, and the result is his finest stylistic achievement. Indeed, if we are to believe Ernest Hemingway it is the most influential prose style in American literature.[7]

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[7] See his much-quoted passage in the first chapter of *The Green Hills of Africa:* "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn.*"

Mr. Eliot, Mr. Trilling, and Huckleberry Finn

LEO MARX

> In the losing battle that the plot fights with the characters, it often takes a cowardly revenge. Nearly all novels are feeble at the end. This is because the plot requires to be wound up. Why is this necessary? Why is there not a convention which allows a novelist to stop as soon as he feels muddled or bored? Alas, he has to round things off, and usually the characters go dead while he is at work, and our final impression of them is through deadness.
>
> E. M. FORSTER

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN has not always occupied its present high place in the canon of American literature. When it was first published in 1885, the book disturbed and offended many re-

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viewers, particularly spokesmen for the genteel tradition.[1] In fact, a fairly accurate inventory of the narrow standards of such critics might be made simply by listing epithets they applied to Clemens' novel. They called it vulgar, rough, inelegant, irreverent, coarse, semi-obscene, trashy and vicious.[2] So much for them. Today (we like to think) we know the true worth of the book. Everyone now agrees that *Huckleberry Finn* is a masterpiece: it is probably the one book in our literature about which highbrows and lowbrows can agree. Our most serious critics praise it. Nevertheless, a close look at what two of the best among them have recently written will likewise reveal, I believe, serious weaknesses in current criticism. Today the problem of evaluating the book is as much obscured by unqualified praise as it once was by parochial hostility.

I have in mind essays by Lionel Trilling and T. S. Eliot.[3] Both praise the book, but in praising it both feel obligated to say something in justification of what so many readers have felt to be its great flaw: the disappointing "ending," the episode which begins when Huck arrives at the Phelps place and Tom Sawyer reappears. There are good reasons why Mr. Trilling and Mr. Eliot should feel the need to face this issue. From the point of view of scope alone, more is involved than the mere "ending"; the episode comprises almost one-fifth of the text. The problem, in any case, is unavoidable. I have discussed *Huckleberry Finn* in courses with hundreds of college students, and I have found only a handful who did not confess their dissatisfaction with the extravagant mock rescue of Nigger Jim and the denouement itself. The same question always comes up: "What went wrong with Twain's novel?" Even Bernard DeVoto, whose wholehearted commitment to Clemens' genius is well known, has said of the ending that "in the whole reach of the

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[1] I use the term "genteel tradition" as George Santayana characterized it in his famous address "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy," first delivered in 1911 and published the following year in his *Winds of Doctrine*. Santayana described the genteel tradition as an "old mentality" inherited from Europe. It consists of the various dilutions of Christian theology and morality, as in transcendentalism—a fastidious and stale philosophy of life no longer relevant to the thought and activities of the United States. "America," he said, "is a young country with an old mentality." (Later references to Santayana also refer to this essay.)

[2] For an account of the first reviews, see A. L. Vogelback, "The Publication and Reception of *Huckleberry Finn* in America," *American Literature*, XI (November, 1939), 260–272.

[3] Mr. Eliot's essay is the introduction to the edition of *Huckleberry Finn* published by Chanticleer Press, New York, 1950. Mr. Trilling's is the introduction to an edition of the novel published by Rinehart, New York, 1948, and later reprinted in his *The Liberal Imagination*, Viking, New York, 1950.

English novel there is no more abrupt or more chilling descent."[4] Mr. Trilling and Mr. Eliot do not agree. They both attempt, and on similar grounds, to explain and defend the conclusion.

Of the two, Mr. Trilling makes the more moderate claim for Clemens' novel. He does admit that there is a "falling off" at the end; nevertheless he supports the episode as having "a certain formal aptness." Mr. Eliot's approval is without serious qualification. He allows no objections, asserts that "it is right that the mood of the end of the book should bring us back to the beginning." I mean later to discuss their views in some detail, but here it is only necessary to note that both critics see the problem as one of form. And so it is. Like many questions of form in literature, however, this one is not finally separable from a question of "content," of value, or, if you will, of moral insight. To bring *Huckleberry Finn* to a satisfactory close, Clemens had to do more than find a neat device for ending a story. His problem, though it may never have occurred to him, was to invent an action capable of placing in focus the meaning of the journey down the Mississippi.

I believe that the ending of *Huckleberry Finn* makes so many readers uneasy because they rightly sense that it jeopardizes the significance of the entire novel. To take seriously what happens at the Phelps farm is to take lightly the entire downstream journey. What is the meaning of the journey? With this question all discussion of *Huckleberry Finn* must begin. It is true that the voyage down the river has many aspects of a boy's idyl. We owe much of its hold upon our imagination to the enchanting image of the raft's unhurried drift with the current. The leisure, the absence of constraint, the beauty of the river—all these things delight us. "It's lovely to live on a raft." And the multitudinous life of the great valley we see through Huck's eyes has a fascination of its own. Then, of course, there is humor—laughter so spontaneous, so free of the bitterness present almost everywhere in American humor that readers often forget how grim a spectacle of human existence Huck contemplates. Humor in this novel flows from a bright joy of life as remote from our world as living on a raft.

Yet along with the idyllic and the epical and the funny in *Huckleberry Finn*, there is a coil of meaning which does for the disparate elements of the novel what a spring does for a watch. The meaning is not in the least obscure. It is made explicit again and again. The very words with which Clemens launches Huck and Jim upon their voyage indicate that theirs is not a boy's lark but a quest for freedom. From the electrifying moment when Huck comes back to Jackson's Island and rouses Jim with the news that a search party is on the way, we are meant to believe that Huck is enlisted in the cause of freedom. "Git up and hump yourself, Jim!" he cries. "There ain't a minute to lose. They're after us!" What particularly counts here is the *us.* No one is after Huck; no one but Jim knows he is alive. In that small word Clemens compresses the exhilarating power of Huck's instinctive humanity. His unpremeditated identification with Jim's flight from slavery is an unforgettable moment in American experience, and it may be said at once that any culmination of the journey which detracts from the urgency and dignity with which it begins will necessarily be unsatisfactory. Huck realizes this himself, and says so when, much later, he comes back to the raft after discovering that the Duke and the King have sold Jim:

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[4] *Mark Twain at Work* (Cambridge, 1942), p. 92.

> After all this long journey . . . here it was all come to nothing, everything all busted up and ruined, because they could have the heart to serve Jim such a trick as that, and make him a slave again all his life, and amongst strangers, too, for forty dirty dollars.

Huck knows that the journey will have been a failure unless it takes Jim to freedom. It is true that we do discover, in the end, that Jim is free, but we also find out that the journey was not the means by which he finally reached freedom.

The most obvious thing wrong with the ending, then, is the flimsy contrivance by which Clemens frees Jim. In the end we not only discover that Jim has been a free man for two months, but that his freedom has been granted by old Miss Watson. If this were only a mechanical device for terminating the action, it might not call for much comment. But it is more than that: it is a significant clue to the import of the last ten chapters. Remember who Miss Watson is. She is the Widow's sister whom Huck introduces in the first pages of the novel. It is she who keeps "pecking" at Huck, who tries to teach him to spell and to pray and to keep his feet off the furniture. She is an ardent proselytizer for piety and good manners, and her greed provides the occasion for the journey in the first place. She is Jim's owner, and he decides to flee only when he realizes that she is about to break her word (she cannot resist a slave trader's offer of eight hundred dollars) and sell him down the river away from his family.

Miss Watson, in short, is the Enemy. If we except a predilection for physical violence, she exhibits all the outstanding traits of the valley society. She pronounces the polite lies of civilization that suffocate

Huck's spirit. The freedom which Jim seeks, and which Huck and Jim temporarily enjoy aboard the raft, is accordingly freedom *from* everything for which Miss Watson stands. Indeed, the very intensity of the novel derives from the discordance between the aspirations of the fugitives and the respectable code for which she is a spokesman. Therefore, her regeneration, of which the deathbed freeing of Jim is the unconvincing sign, hints a resolution of the novel's essential conflict. Perhaps because this device most transparently reveals that shift in point of view which he could not avoid, and which is less easily discerned elsewhere in the concluding chapters, Clemens plays it down. He makes little attempt to account for Miss Watson's change of heart, a change particularly surprising in view of Jim's brazen escape. Had Clemens given this episode dramatic emphasis appropriate to its function, Miss Watson's bestowal of freedom upon Jim would have proclaimed what the rest of the ending actually accomplishes—a vindication of persons and attitudes Huck and Jim had symbolically repudiated when they set forth downstream.

It may be said, and with some justice, that a reading of the ending as a virtual reversal of meanings implicit in the rest of the novel misses the point—that I have taken the final episode too seriously. I agree that Clemens certainly did not intend us to read it so solemnly. The ending, one might contend, is simply a burlesque upon Tom's taste for literary romance. Surely the tone of the episode is familiar to readers of Mark Twain. The preposterous monkey business attendant upon Jim's "rescue," the careless improvisation, the nonchalant disregard for common-sense plausibility—all these things should not surprise readers of Twain or any low comedy in the tradition of "Western humor." However, the trouble is, first, that the ending hardly comes off as burlesque: it is *too* fanciful, *too* extravagant; and it is tedious. For example, to provide a "gaudy" atmosphere for the escape, Huck and Tom catch a couple of dozen snakes. Then the snakes escape.

> No, there warn't no real scarcity of snakes about the house for a considerable spell. You'd see them dripping from the rafters and places every now and then; and they generly landed in your plate, or down the back of your neck. . . .

Even if this were *good* burlesque, which it is not, what is it doing here? It is out of keeping; the slapstick tone jars with the underlying seriousness of the voyage.

Huckleberry Finn is a masterpiece because it brings Western humor to perfection and yet transcends the narrow limits of its conventions. But the ending does not. During the final extravaganza we are forced to put aside many of the mature emotions evoked earlier by the vivid rendering of Jim's fear of capture, the tenderness of Huck's and Jim's regard for each other, and Huck's excruciating moments of wavering between honesty and respectability. None of these emotions are called forth by the anticlimactic final sequence. I do not mean to suggest that the inclusion of low comedy *per se* is a flaw in *Huckleberry Finn.* One does not object to the shenanigans of the rogues; there is ample precedent for the place of extravagant humor even in works of high seriousness. But here the case differs from most which come to mind: the major characters themselves are forced to play low comedy roles. Moreover, the most serious motive in the novel, Jim's yearning for freedom, is made the object of nonsense. The conclusion, in short, is farce, but the rest of the novel is not.

That Clemens reverts in the end to the conventional manner of Western low comedy is most evident in what happens to the principals. Huck and Jim become comic characters; that is a much more serious ground for dissatisfaction than the unexplained regeneration of Miss Watson. Remember that Huck has grown in stature throughout the journey. By the time he arrives at the Phelps place, he is not the boy who had been playing robbers with Tom's gang in St. Petersburg the summer before. All he has seen and felt since he parted from Tom has deepened his knowledge of human nature and of himself. Clemens makes a point of Huck's development in two scenes which occur just before he meets Tom again. The first describes Huck's final capitulation to his own sense of right and wrong: "All right, then, I'll *go* to Hell." This is the climactic moment in the ripening of his self-knowledge. Shortly afterward, when he comes upon a mob riding the Duke and the King out of town on a rail, we are given his most memorable insight into the nature of man. Although these rogues had subjected Huck to every indignity, what he sees provokes this celebrated comment:

> Well, it made me sick to see it; and I was sorry for them poor pitiful rascals, it seemed like I couldn't ever feel any hardness against them any more in the world. It was a dreadful thing to see. Human beings can be awful cruel to one another.

The sign of Huck's maturity here is neither the compassion nor the skepticism, for both had been marks of his personality from the first. Rather, the special quality of these reflections is the extraordinary combination of the two, a mature blending of his instinctive suspicion of human motives with his capacity for pity.

But at this point Tom reappears. Soon Huck has fallen almost completely under his sway once more, and we are asked to believe that the boy who felt pity for the rogues is now capable of making Jim's capture the occasion for a game. He becomes Tom's helpless accomplice, submissive and gullible. No wonder that Clemens has Huck remark, when Huck first realizes Aunt Sally has mistaken him for Tom, that "it was like being born again." Exactly. In the end, Huck regresses to the subordinate role in which he had first appeared in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Most of those traits which made him so appealing a hero now disappear. He had never, for example, found pain or misfortune amusing. At the circus, when a clown disguised as a drunk took a precarious ride on a prancing horse, the crowd loved the excitement and danger; "it warn't funny to me, though," said Huck. But now, in the end, he submits in awe to Tom's notion of what is amusing. To satisfy Tom's hunger for adventure he makes himself a party to sport which aggravates Jim's misery.

It should be added at once that Jim doesn't mind too much. The fact is that he has undergone a similar transformation. On the raft he was an individual, man enough to denounce Huck when Huck made him the victim of a practical joke. In the closing episode, however, we lose sight of Jim in the maze of farcical invention. He ceases to be a man. He allows Huck and "Mars Tom" to fill his hut with rats and snakes, "and every time a rat bit Jim he would get up and write a line in his journal whilst the ink was fresh." This creature who bleeds ink and feels no pain is something less than human. He has been made over in the image of a flat stereotype: the submissive stage-Negro. These antics divest Jim, as well as Huck, of much of his dignity and individuality.[5]

What I have been saying is that the flimsy devices of plot, the discordant farcical tone, and the disintegration of the major characters all betray the failure of the ending. These are not aspects merely of form in a technical sense, but of meaning. For that matter, I would maintain that this book has little or no formal unity independent of the joint purpose of Huck and Jim. What components of the novel, we may ask, provide the continuity which links one adventure with another? The most important is the unifying consciousness of Huck, the narrator, and the fact that we follow the same principals through the entire string of adventures. Events, moreover, occur in a temporal sequence. Then there is the river; after each adventure Huck and Jim return to the raft and the river. Both Mr. Trilling and Mr. Eliot speak eloquently of the river as a source of unity, and they refer to the river as a god. Mr. Trilling says that Huck is "the servant of the river-god." Mr. Eliot puts it this way: "The River gives the book its form. But for the River, the book might be only a sequence of adventures with a happy ending." This seems to me an extravagant view of the function of the neutral agency of the river. Clemens had a knowledgeable respect for the Mississippi, and, without sanctifying it, was able to provide excellent reasons for Huck's and Jim's intense relation with it. It is a source of food and beauty and terror and serenity of mind. But above all, it provides motion; it is the means by which Huck and Jim move away from a menacing civilization. They return to the river to continue their journey. The river cannot, does not, supply purpose. That purpose is a facet of their consciousness, and without the motive of escape from society, *Huckleberry Finn* would indeed "be only a sequence of adventures." Mr. Eliot's remark indicates how lightly he takes the quest for freedom. His somewhat fanciful exaggeration of the river's role is of a piece with his neglect of the theme at the novel's center.

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[5] For these observations on the transformation of Jim in the closing episodes, I am indebted to the excellent unpublished essay by Mr. Chadwick Hansen on the subject of Clemens and Western humor.

That theme is heightened by the juxtaposition of sharp images of contrasting social orders: the microcosmic community Huck and Jim establish aboard the raft and the actual society which exists along the Mississippi's banks. The two are separated by the river, the road to freedom upon which Huck and Jim must travel. Huck tells us what the river means to them when, after the Wilks episode, he and Jim once again shove their raft into the current: "It *did* seem so good to be free again and all by ourselves on the big river, and nobody to bother us." The river is indifferent. But its sphere is relatively uncontaminated by the civilization they flee, and so the river allows Huck and Jim some measure of freedom at once, the moment they set foot on Jackson's Island or the raft. Only on the island and the raft do they have a chance to practice that idea of brotherhood to which they are devoted. "Other places do seem so cramped and smothery," Huck explains, "but a raft don't. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft." The main thing is freedom.

On the raft the escaped slave and the white boy try to practice their code: "What you want, above all things, on a raft, is for everybody to be satisfied, and feel right and kind towards the others." This human credo constitutes the paramount affirmation of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* and it obliquely aims a devastating criticism at the existing social order. It is a creed which Huck and Jim bring to the river. It neither emanates from nature nor is it addressed to nature. Therefore I do not see that it means much to talk about the river as a god in this novel. The river's connection with this high aspiration for man is that it provides a means of escape, a place where the code can be tested. The truly profound meanings of the novel are generated by the impingement of the actual world of slavery, feuds, lynching, murder, and a spurious Christian morality upon the ideal of the raft. The result is a tension which somehow demands release in the novel's ending.

But Clemens was unable to effect this release and at the same time control the central theme. The unhappy truth about the ending of *Huckleberry Finn* is that the author, having revealed the tawdry nature of the culture of the great valley, yielded to its essential complacency. The general tenor of the closing scenes, to which the token regeneration of Miss Watson is merely tone superficial clue, amounts to just that. In fact, this entire reading of *Hucklebery Finn* merely confirms the brilliant insight of George Santayana, who many years ago spoke of American humorists, of whom he considered Mark Twain an outstanding representative, as having only "half escaped" the genteel tradition. Santayana meant that men like Clemens were able to "point to what contradicts it in the facts; but not in order to abandon the genteel tradition, for they have nothing solid to put in its place." This seems to me the real key to the failure of *Huckleberry Finn.* Clemens had presented the contrast between the two social orders but could not, or would not, accept the tragic fact that the one he had rejected was an image of solid reality and the other an ecstatic dream. Instead he gives us the cozy reunion with Aunt Polly in a scene fairly bursting with approbation of the entire family, the Phelpses included.

Like Miss Watson, the Phelpses are almost perfect specimens of the dominant culture. They are kind to their friends and relatives; they have no taste for violence; they are people capable of devoting themselves to their spectacular dinners while they keep Jim locked in the little hut down by the ash hopper, with its lone window boarded up. (Of course Aunt Sally visits Jim to see if he is "comfortable," and Uncle Silas comes in "to pray with him.") These people, with their comfortable Sunday-dinner conviviality and the runaway slave padlocked nearby, are reminiscent of those solid German citizens we have heard about in our time who tried to maintain a similarly *gemütlich* way of life within virtual earshot of Buchenwald. I do not mean to imply that Clemens was unaware of the shabby morality of such people. After the abortive escape of Jim, when Tom asks about him, Aunt Sally replies: "Him? . . . the runaway nigger? . . . They've got him back, safe and sound, and he's in the cabin again, on bread and water, and loaded down with chains, till he's claimed or sold!" Clemens understood people like the Phelpses, but nevertheless he was forced to rely upon them to provide his happy ending. The satisfactory outcome of Jim's quest for freedom must be attributed to the benevolence of the very people whose inhumanity first made it necessary.

But to return to the contention of Mr. Trilling and Mr. Eliot that the ending is more or less satisfactory after all. As I have said, Mr. Trilling approves of the "formal aptness" of the conclusion. He says that "some device is needed to permit Huck to return to his anonymity, to give up the role of hero," and that therefore "nothing could serve better than the mind of Tom Sawyer with its literary furnishings, its conscious romantic desire for experience and the hero's part, and its ingenious schematization of life. . . ." Though more detailed, this is essentially akin to Mr. Eliot's blunt assertion that "it is right that the mood at the end of the book should bring us back to that of the beginning." I submit that it is wrong for the end of the book to bring us back to that mood. The mood of the beginning of *Huckleberry Finn* is the mood of Huck's attempt to accommodate himself to the ways of St. Petersburg. It is the mood of the end of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, when the boys had been acclaimed heroes, and when Huck was accepted as a candidate for respectability. That is the state in which we find him at the beginning of *Huckleberry Finn.* But Huck cannot stand the new way of life, and his mood gradually shifts to the mood of rebellion which dominates the novel until he meets Tom again. At first, in the second chapter, we see him still eager to be accepted by the nice boys of the town. Tom leads the gang in re-enacting adventures he has culled from books, but gradually Huck's pragmatic turn of mind gets him in trouble. He has little tolerance for Tom's brand of make-believe. He irritates Tom. Tom calls him a "numbskull," and finally Huck throws up the whole business:

> So then I judged that all that stuff was only just one of Tom Sawyer's lies. I reckoned he believed in the A-rabs and the elephants, but as for me I think different. It had all the marks of a Sunday-school.

With this statement, which ends the third chapter, Huck parts company with Tom. The fact is that Huck has rejected Tom's romanticizing of experience; moreover, he has rejected it as part of the larger pattern of society's make-believe, typified by Sunday school. But if he cannot accept Tom's harmless fantasies about the A-rabs, how are we to believe that a year later Huck is capable of awe-struck submission to the far more extravagant fantasies with which Tom invests the mock rescue of Jim?

After Huck's escape from his "pap," the drift of the action, like that of the Mississippi's current, is *away* from St. Petersburg. Huck leaves Tom and the A-rabs behind, along with the Widow, Miss Watson, and all the pseudo-religious ritual in which nice boys must partake. The return, in the end, to the mood of the beginning therefore means defeat—Huck's defeat; to return to that mood *joyously* is to portray defeat in the guise of victory.

Mr. Eliot and Mr. Trilling deny this. The overriding consideration for them is form—form which seems largely to mean symmetry of structure. It is fitting, Mr. Eliot maintains, that the book should come full circle and bring Huck once more under Tom's sway. Why? Because it begins that way. But it seems to me that such structural unity is *imposed* upon the novel, and therefore is mereticious. It is a jerry-built structure, achieved only by sacrifice of characters and theme. Here the controlling principle of form apparently is unity, but unfortunately a unity much too superficially conceived. Structure, after all, is only one element—indeed, one of the more mechanical elements—of unity. A unified work must surely manifest coherence of meaning and clear development of theme, yet the ending of *Huckleberry Finn* blurs both. The eagerness of Mr. Eliot and Mr. Trilling to justify the ending is symptomatic of that absolutist impulse of our critics to find reasons, once a work has been admitted to the highest canon of literary reputability, for admiring every bit of it.

What is perhaps most striking about these judgments of Mr. Eliot's and Mr. Trilling's is that they are so patently out of harmony with the basic standards of both critics. For one thing, both men hold far more complex ideas of the nature of literary unity than their comments upon *Huckleberry Finn* would suggest. For another, both critics are essentially moralists, yet here we find them turning away from a moral issue in order to praise a dubious structural unity. Their efforts to explain away the flaw in Clemens' novel suffer from a certain narrowness surprising to anyone who knows their work. These facts suggest that we may be in the presence of a tendency in contemporary criticism which the critics themselves do not fully recognize.

Is there an explanation? How does it happen that two of our most respected critics should seem to treat so lightly the glaring lapse of moral imagination in *Huckleberry Finn?* Perhaps—and I stress the conjectural nature of what I am saying—perhaps the kind of moral issue raised by *Huckleberry Finn* is not the kind of moral issue to which today's criticism readily addresses itself. Today our critics, no less than our novelists and poets, are most sensitively attuned to moral problems which arise in the sphere of individual behavior. They are deeply aware of sin, of individual infractions of our culture's Christian ethic. But my impression is that they are, possibly because of the strength of the reaction against the mechanical sociological criticism of the thirties, less sensitive to questions of what might be called social or political morality.

By social or political morality I refer to the values implicit in a social system, values which may be quite distinct from the personal morality of any given individual within the society. Now *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, like all novels, deals with the behavior of individuals. But one mark of Clemens' greatness is his deft presentation of the disparity between what people do when they behave as individuals and what they do when forced into roles imposed upon them by society. Take, for example, Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas Phelps, who consider themselves Christians, who are by impulse generous and humane, but who happen also to be staunch upholders of certain degrading and inhuman social institutions. When they are confronted with an escaped slave, the imperatives of social morality outweigh all pious professions.

The conflict between what people think they stand for and what social pressure forces them to do is central to the novel. It is present to the mind of Huck and, indeed, accounts for his most serious inner conflicts. He knows how he feels about Jim, but he also knows what he is expected to do about Jim. This division within his mind corresponds to the division of the novel's moral terrain into the areas represented by the raft on the one hand and society on the other. His victory over his "yaller dog" conscience therefore assumes heroic size: it is a victory over the prevailing morality. But the last fifth of the novel has the effect of diminishing the importance and uniqueness of Huck's victory. We are asked to assume that somehow freedom can be achieved in spite of the crippling power of what I have called the social morality. Consequently the less importance we attach to that force as it operates in the novel, the more acceptable the ending becomes.

Moreover, the idea of freedom, which Mr. Eliot and Mr. Trilling seem to slight, takes on its full significance only when we acknowledge the power which society exerts over the minds of men in the world of *Huckleberry Finn*. For freedom in this book specifically means freedom from society and its imperatives. This is not the traditional Christian conception of freedom. Huck and Jim seek freedom not from a burden of individual guilt and sin, but from social constraint. That is to say, evil in *Huckleberry Finn* is the product of civilization, and if this is indicative of Clemens' rather too simple view of human nature, nevertheless the fact is that Huck, when he can divest himself of the taint of social conditioning (as in the incantatory account of sunrise on the river), is entirely free of anxiety and guilt. The only guilt he actually knows arises from infractions of a social code. (The guilt he feels after playing the prank on Jim stems from his betrayal of the law of the raft.) Huck's and Jim's creed is secular. Its object is harmony among men, and so Huck is not much concerned with his own salvation. He repeatedly renounces prayer in favor of pragmatic solutions to his problems. In other words, the central insights of the novel belong to the tradition of the Enlightenment. The meaning of the quest itself is hardly reconcilable with that conception of human nature embodied in the myth of original sin. In view of the current fashion of reaffirming man's innate depravity, it is perhaps not surprising to find the virtues of *Hucklebery Finn* attributed not to its meaning but to its form.

But "if this was not the right ending for the book," Mr. Eliot asks, "what ending would have been right?" Although this question places the critic in an awkward position (he is not always equipped to rewrite what he criticizes), there are some things which may justifiably be said about the "right" ending of *Huckleberry Finn.* It may be legitimate, even if presumptuous, to indicate certain conditions which a hypothetical ending would have to satisfy if it were to be congruent with the rest of the novel. If the conclusion is not to be something merely tacked on to close the action, then its broad outline must be immanent in the body of the work.

It is surely reasonable to ask that the conclusion provide a plausible outcome to the quest. Yet freedom, in the ecstatic sense that Huck and Jim knew it aboard the raft, was hardly to be had in the Mississippi Valley in the 1840's, or, for that matter, in any other known human society. A satisfactory ending would inevitably cause the reader some frustration. That Clemens felt such disappointment to be inevitable is borne out by an examination of the novel's clear, if unconscious, symbolic pattern. Consider, for instance, the inferences to be drawn from the book's geography. The river, to whose current Huck and Jim entrust themselves, actually carries them to the heart of slave territory. Once the raft passes Cairo, the quest is virtually doomed. Until the steamboat smashes the raft, we are kept in a state of anxiety about Jim's escape. (It may be significant that at this point Clemens found himself unable to continue work on the manuscript, and put it aside for several years.) Beyond Cairo, Clemens allows the intensity of that anxiety to diminish, and it is probably no accident that the fainter it becomes, the more he falls back upon the devices of low comedy. Huck and Jim make no serious effort to turn north, and there are times (during the Wilks episode) when Clemens allows Huck to forget all about Jim. It is as if the author, anticipating the dilemma he had finally to face, instinctively dissipated the power of his major theme.

Consider, too, the circumscribed nature of the raft as a means of moving toward freedom. The raft lacks power and maneuverability. It can only move easily with the current—southward into slave country. Nor can it evade the mechanized power of the steamboat. These impotencies of the raft correspond to the innocent helplessness of its occupants. Unresisted, the rogues invade and take over the raft. Though it is the symbolic locus of the novel's central affirmations, the raft provides an uncertain and indeed precarious mode of traveling toward freedom. This seems another confirmation of Santayana's perception. To say that Clemens only half escaped the genteel tradition is not to say that he failed to note any of the creed's inadequacies, but rather that he had "nothing solid" to put in its place. The raft patently was not capable of carrying the burden of hope Clemens placed upon it.[6] (Whether this is to be attributed to the nature of his vision or to the actual state of American society in the nineteenth century is another interesting question.) In any case, the geography of the novel, the raft's powerlessness, the goodness and vulnerability of Huck and Jim, all prefigure a conclusion quite different in tone from that which Clemens gave us. These facts constitute what Hart Crane might have called the novel's "logic of metaphor," and this logic—probably inadvertent—actually takes us to the underlying meaning of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* Through the symbols we reach a truth which the ending obscures: the quest cannot succeed.

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[6] Gladys Bellamy (*Mark Twain As a Literary Artist*, Norman, Oklahoma, 1950, p. 221.) has noted the insubstantial, dream-like quality of the image of the raft. Clemens thus discusses travel by raft in *A Tramp Abroad:* "The motion of the raft is . . . gentle, and gliding, and smooth, and noiseless; it calms down all feverish activities, it soothes to sleep all nervous . . . impatience; under its restful influence all the troubles and vexations and sorrows that harass the mind vanish away, and existence becomes a dream . . . a deep and tranquil ecstasy."

Fortunately, Clemens broke through to this truth in the novel's last sentences:

> But I reckon I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and civilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before.

Mr. Eliot properly praises this as "the only possible concluding sentence." But one sentence can hardly be advanced, as Mr. Eliot advances this one, to support the rightness of ten chapters. Moreover, if this sentence is right, then the rest of the conclusion is wrong, for its meaning clashes with that of the final burlesque. Huck's decision to go west ahead of the inescapable advance of civilization is a confession of defeat. It means that the raft is to be abandoned. On the other hand, the jubilation of the family reunion and the proclaiming of Jim's freedom create a quite different mood. The tone, except for these last words, is one of unclouded success. I believe this is the source of the almost universal dissatisfaction with the conclusion. One can hardly forget that a bloody civil war did not resolve the issue.

Should Clemens have made Huck a tragic hero? Both Mr. Eliot and Mr. Trilling argue that that would have been a mistake, and they are very probably correct. But between the ending as we have it and tragedy in the fullest sense, there was vast room for invention. Clemens might have contrived an action which left Jim's fate as much in doubt as Huck's. Such an ending would have allowed us to assume that the principals were defeated but alive, and the quest unsuccessful but not abandoned. This, after all, would have been consonant with the symbols, the characters, and the theme as Clemens had created them—and with history.

Clemens did not acknowledge the truth his novel contained. He had taken hold of a situation in which a partial defeat was inevitable, but he was unable to—or unaware of the need to—give imaginative substance to that fact. If an illusion of success was indispensable, where was it to come from? Obviously Huck and Jim could not succeed by their own efforts. At this point Clemens, having only half escaped the genteel tradition, one of whose pre-eminent characteristics was an optimism undaunted by disheartening truth, returned to it. *Why* he did so is another story, having to do with his parents and his boyhood, with his own personality and his wife's, and especially with the character of his audience.

But whatever the explanation, the faint-hearted ending of *The Adventures of Hucklebery Finn* remains an important datum in the record of American thought and imagination. It has been noted before, both by critics and non-professional readers. It should not be forgotten now.

To minimize the seriousness of what must be accounted a major flaw in so great a work is, in a sense, to repeat Clemens' failure of nerve. This is a disservice to criticism. Today we particularly need a criticism alert to lapses of moral vision. A measured appraisal of the failures and successes of our writers, past and present, can show us a great deal about literature and about ourselves. That is the critic's function. But he cannot perform that function if he substitutes considerations of technique for considerations of truth. Not only will such methods lead to errors of literary judgment, but beyond that, they may well encourage comparable evasions in other areas. It seems not unlikely, for instance, that the current preoccupation with matters of form is bound up with a tendency, by no means confined to literary quarters, to shy away from painful answers to complex questions of political morality. The conclusion to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* shielded both Clemens and his audience from such an answer. But we ought not to be as tender-minded. For Huck Finn's besetting problem, the disparity between his best impulses and the behavior the community attempted to impose upon him, is as surely ours as it was Twain's.

Huck's Final Triumph

RAY B. BROWNE

NEARLY ALL READERS affirm the greatness of *Huckleberry Finn.* Most critics, with varying emphases, concur on the reasons for this greatness. The book is a bitter criticism of ante-bellum Southern life and its consequent social and religious attitudes; it pictures the growth of a boy to adulthood; and, most deeply, it depicts a quest for freedom. Leo Marx epitomizes critics' feelings in saying: "The truly profound mean-

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ings of the novel are generated by the impingement of the actual world of slavery, feuds, lynching, murder, and a spurious Christian morality upon the ideal of the raft." [1]

Agreement on the achievement of the novel splits, however, on the ending. Many critics hold strong reservations about this part. DeVoto, generally a staunch supporter of Twain, called it a "chilling descent." [2] Henry Nash Smith feels the Huck of this section is "inferior" to the great lad who developed during the river voyage, and says that Jim's sacrifice of his freedom in order to assist Tom does not "fully redeem the ending." [3] Smith and Marx censure it for being, in the latter's words, perhaps "simply a burlesque on Tom's taste for literary romance," and Marx further reproves it by saying that the ending "jeopardizes the significance of the entire novel." [4]

Other critics stoutly defend the final chapters. Lionel Trilling, though admitting it is a "falling off," sees the ending as having "a certain formal aptness" which allows Huck to return to his needed former anonymity.[5] T. S. Eliot applauds it without reservation for correctly bringing us "back to the beginning." [6] R. P. Adams perceptively declares that the ending leaves in the reader's mind the feeling that "Huck will continue to develop. He will escape again. . . . The conclusion is deliberately inconclusive." [7] James Cox asserts that the ending is a "stylistic rather than a structural flaw"; "Tom's presence" there is "not only vital but inevitable; it proves that Huck must go west because he knows that to be Huck Finn is to be the outcast beyond the paling fences." [8] Thomas A. Gullason insists that the ending rounds out Twain's objectives of killing off romanticism and of demonstrating "man's inhumanity to man, and Huck's faith in Jim's humanity." [9]

These approvals of the novel *in toto*, as I shall demonstrate, are correct, but for the wrong reasons. The ending, though unnecessarily long, is indispensable for the working out of the real purpose of the book. This purpose, however, has not been properly understood.

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[1] "Mr. Eliot, Mr. Trilling and *Huckleberry Finn*," *American Scholar*, XXII (Autumn, 1953), 431.

[2] *Mark Twain at Work* (Cambridge, Mass., 1942), p. 92.

[3] Introduction to *Huckleberry Finn* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1958), p. xxii. All subsequent references to the novel are to this edition and are given in the text.

[4] Marx, *op. cit.*, pp. 427, 425.

[5] Introduction to *Huckleberry Finn* (New York: Rinehart, 1958), p. xv.

[6] Introduction to *Huckleberry Finn* (New York: Chanticleer, 1950), p. xiv.

[7] "The Unity and Coherence of Huckleberry Finn," *Tulane Studies in English*, VI (1956), 102.

[8] "Remarks on the Sad Initiation of Huckleberry Finn," *Sewanee Review*, LXII (Summer, 1954), 401.

[9] "The 'Fatal' Ending of *Huckleberry Finn*," *American Literature*, XXIX (March, 1957), 87.

The main, overriding theme of the novel is Huck's search for personal liberation, for the freedom which can come only with his growth into the maturity which will allow him to declare once and for all times unequivocally that he is his own master, able to rise above and to be indifferent to the lures to refuge cast out by society. It is this quest—not the Huck-Jim flight from physical slavery, not Huck's attempted escape from society *per se*, not even Huck's victory of heart over conscience—which forms the backbone of the book.

This theme develops in three interwoven strands: Huck's growth away from and above the other main characters—Tom, Jim, and Pap—and what they symbolize. Each strand must be traced through the novel until all coalesce in the climactic last few lines.

I

THROUGHOUT THE BOOK Huck's attitude toward the life around him is remarkably ambivalent. Though he clearly is rebelling against respectability and civilization, he rebels mainly because they make him uncomfortable and ill at ease. He fights them by running away. When he can no longer abide the "pecking" of the Widow and Miss Watson, and the privations they force upon him, he flees, but only to the rags and sugar-hogshead of the other side of town. He does not need to go farther. In fact, he must stay within commuting distance of respectable folk. And he quickly and easily returns when a lure is held up to him. The agent who entices Huck back from rags to respectability is, of course, Tom Sawyer. Tom at this time clearly symbolized Huck's ideal.

Tom is a rebel. He battles the world around him. He attacks the *status quo*, and seemingly threatens to overturn it. Yet his battles are all shams. If he ever overthrew his paper dragons, his crusading spirit would collapse. He lives happily in his society. After the lark of playing battler, he always joyously returns to the safety and security of Aunt Polly. This clash of danger and safety appeals to Huck, and it is epitomized in the person of Tom. Huck will therefore make any sacrifice for his hero, even to giving up the comfort and freedom he so immensely enjoys. Tom has saturated and captivated Huck's consciousness. Near or far he is the older boy's evil genius.

But Huck is not satisfied or happy for long in his enslavement. Though he sees the world through Tom's rose colored glasses, and though his spontaneous reaction to any situation is usually Tom's, Huck is restive. He is galled by his fetters and tries to break away. The fact is that he cannot live without Tom—or with him. He seeks a *modus vivendi* with Tom and his world, but cannot find it. Huck's victory over this forced compromise constitutes one of the great achievements in the book.

Demonstration of Huck's ambivalence begins at the outset of the novel. Huck recounts how in *Tom Sawyer* he was adopted by Widow Douglas, could not tolerate her "sivilizing" him and therefore ran away to his rags, where he was "free and satisfied." But Tom lured him back with the promise that he could become a member of the band of robbers. "So I went back," Huck states matter-of-factly. The close bond between the two boys is further revealed when Miss Watson tries to get Huck, who is hell-bent, to reform and thus prepare for the other destination; Huck is content with hell when Miss Watson assures him that Tom will be there too: "I wanted him and me to be together."

But no sooner does Huck join the band of robbers than the two boys' incompatibility manifests itself and he begins to drag his feet. After playing robber for a month, Huck resigns. He can no longer pretend that hogs are "ingots" and turnips are "julery." He wants to see the "di'monds," A-rabs and elephants. For his protests, Tom calls him a "numbskull," and "perfect sap-head." Huck's revulsion overcomes him. "I judged that all that stuff was only one of Tom Sawyer's lies. . . . It had all the marks of a Sunday School." Tom the romantic dreamer, the sham adventurer, thus symbolized everything that frightens Huck: St. Petersburg civilization, religion, romantic literature. From this monster Huck flees.

Yet fly as he will, Huck cannot shake off Tom, who is a ghost that refuses to be laid. When Huck "kills" himself to escape from Pap, he does it on Tom's terms: "I did wish Tom Sawyer was there, I knowed he would take an interest in this kind of business, and throw in the fancy touches" (p. 29). Again, on the night of the storm, when Huck is trying to convince Jim to board the wrecked *Walter Scott*, the force that drives Huck aboard is not the promise of loot—of "seegars" and "solid cash"—but the irresistible urge to imitate Tom. "I can't rest, Jim, till we give her a rummaging. Do you reckon Tom Sawyer would ever go by this thing? Not for pie, he wouldn't. . . . I wish Tom Sawyer *was* here" (p. 57).

Later, in Tennessee while the King and Duke play Peter Wilks' brothers, when Huck has adroitly maneuvered Mary Jane away from the house and has satisfactorily lied to the other girls, he congratulates himself, with his inevitable comparison: "I felt very good; I judged I had done it pretty neat—I reckon Tom Sawyer couldn't a done it no neater himself" (p. 163). Still later, in Pikesville, when Huck discovers that the King has turned in Jim for the sum of $40, he decides to write home and have Jim's owner send for him. But he automatically thinks of writing to Tom and having him tell Miss Watson where Jim is. The point is that in Huck's mind St. Petersburg—that world—and Tom are one and the same, inseparable, with Tom the symbol.

With Tom so constantly—and so heavily—on his mind, Huck naturally—and not surprisingly—acquiesces in the deception when Aunt Sally mistakes him for Tom. Huck's first impulse has always been to give in to Tom. Why should he not be flattered *to be* Tom? Indeed, discovering that he was supposed to be Tom Sawyer "was like being born again," in the sense of being re-born into the world of St. Petersburg and of Tom. "Being Tom Sawyer was easy and comfortable," Huck confesses immediately. Once it is settled that Huck will be Tom and Tom will be Sid, the future looks rosy. Everything will be "easy and comfortable." Huck relaxes completely, suspending his mental processes—becoming again the blind disciple. For example, it is inconceivable that the Huck of the voyage, with his mind alerted for signs of Jim, could see a slave enter an isolated cabin with food—part of it watermelon—and not suspect its purpose.

Yet the somnolent Huck does: "Well, it does beat all, that I never thought about a dog not eating watermelon. It shows how a body can see and don't see at the same time" (p. 195).

But in Huck's acquiescence there immediately becomes manifest the old attraction-revulsion tug-of-war he felt in St. Petersburg. And after the initial joy of being Tom has worn off, Huck begins to protest. In the old environment, the last time the boys shared an adventure, it took Huck a month to break away. Now, however, Huck's new nature shows through quickly. When he and Tom are concocting schemes for the release of Jim, Huck gives his plan first, then sits back waiting for the "superior" one; when Tom springs his, Huck reflects ironically: "I see in a minute it was worth fifteen of mine, for style, and would make Jim just as free a man as mine would, and maybe get us all killed besides" (p. 195).

After this initial resistance, Huck protests each new detail of the plan, as the more mature person realizes the absurdity of Tom's childish pranks. He protests, but he gives in each time. Each protest, in fact, is weaker than its predecessor. In this increasing weakness lies Huck's downfall. His resistance—his maturity—is being abraded. He is coming more and more under the mesmeric influence of Tom. Finally he capitulates completely: "Anyway that suits you suits me," he says when Tom wants him to dress up like a servant-girl to deliver the warning of the release of Jim.

Throughout the remainder of the evasion, Huck protests not at all. During the actual escape he apparently enjoys himself. It is action, of course, instead of romantic theorizing, and therefore appeals to the pragmatic Huck. But—far more significantly—Huck's new self is being subsumed under Tom's. So fast has been the activity since Tom's arrival that Huck has not had a chance to be alone and to reflect, and it is only when he has searched his soul through active thinking that his true self emerges. Now, caught up in activity, he is becoming the old Huck again, so completely under the influence of Tom that he is ready to "slide out" with Tom and Jim and "go for howling adventures amongst the Injuns, over in the Territory, for a couple of weeks or two."

At this point Huck is faced with the greatest crisis of his life. Once before he was confronted with a mighty decision, when he had to choose between being respectable and returning Jim to Miss Watson, and being himself, listening to the voice of his heart, not returning Jim—and going to hell. He chose the latter course, but only after great soul-searching, in solitude and silence: "I . . . set there thinking—thinking. . . . And went on thinking. And got to thinking . . ." (p. 179). In this even greater crisis if the new boy is to prevail over the old, clearly he needs time to think and think. Luckily, time is provided.

II

JIM, while in the environment of St. Petersburg, is far from extraordinary. Like Huck he is completely duped by Tom and thoroughly under his influence. He is lazy and drowsy-headed. For example, on the night that Huck comes out of the Widow's house in answer to Tom's "meow," Jim overhears them and comes out to investigate the noise. He stands between the hiding boys close enough to touch either but does not detect them. Almost immediately he relaxes into his favorite position and occupation: he sits down between them to "listen till I hears [the noise] again," and falls asleep.

He is also haughty and without integrity. After he wakes from this sleep and finds his hat hung on a limb, put there by Tom as a joke, he begins to claim that witches rode him all over the State. Subsequently he enlarges the area over which he was ridden to New Orleans, then to all the world. As proof of this witch-riding, he fraudulently introduces the five-cent piece that Tom had left on the kitchen table in payment for the candles. He swaggers and struts, and charges the other slaves "anything they had" just for a sight of the coin. He "got so stuck up" that he was "almost ruined for a servant."

Furthermore Jim is a con man. When Huck sees his father's boot-track in the snow, he is terrified, and goes to Jim to have his future read. This is clearly no time for humbuggery. Jim gets out his hair-ball, tests it, and discovers that "sometimes it won't talk without money." Huck gives him a counterfeit quarter that has the brass showing through. Jim smells, bites and rubs it, then declares it will suffice, because he can place it in a split potato and leave it overnight and thus make it undetectable, and "anybody in town would take it in a minute, let alone a hair-ball" (p. 16). Obviously the quarter will not remain with the hair-ball.

Jim deceives the distraught boy shamelessly. In answer to Huck's question about his father's future activities, Jim answers that he had not yet made up his mind; two angels are "hovering over him" trying to influence his behavior. But Huck need not worry, for he is "all right." Huck is thus reassured. But when he "lit my candle and went up to my room that night, there sat Pap, his own self!" Jim's hair-ball had not seen very clearly or deeply for the counterfeit quarter.

This Jim is infinitely inferior to the noble man of the raft. The explanation is simple. As long as he is in St. Petersburg, Jim is dominated by his society. In a slave's world he has a slave's mentality and morality; in Tom Sawyer's world Jim behaves as he had been trained: he has the superstitions, prejudices of the white society; he must be a fraud and a con man. Only when he is purged of this civilization and is protected by the dominating influence of Huck does his noble self rise to the surface. If Jim is the catalytic agent that brings out the best in Huck (as he is to a certain extent), so is Huck the means by which Jim achieves his true stature.

Away from St. Petersburg Jim is a moral giant until he arrives at Pikesville. Here he undergoes his second metamorphosis. Like Huck he could say he is re-born when he is turned over to Phelps as a runaway slave. Although he is eleven hundred miles down river, he is reintroduced into the society of his former home.

Immediately he begins to act like a citizen of St. Petersburg. He reveals the truth about the "Royal Nonesuch," knowing full well the consequences to the Duke and King. This informing is an act of revenge.

Jim suffers no heart-rending debate between conscience and heart. He wants to gets even. His moral lapse is apparently instantaneous and complete. He is again a full-fledged citizen of the slave world he knew earlier.

This is the creature who passively and unprotestingly submits to all the indignities piled upon him by Tom. Then after being drubbed through them, he is placated by a gift of $40. More than placated; he is "pleased most to death." There is great significance in the sum of money. Jim was sold into physical slavery for the same amount; he went protestingly, snapping at the man responsible. But now for an equal amount he has sold all claims to dignity: he is thoroughly human, as venal as the whites around him. To gauge the distance he has fallen, one need only remember Huck's effort on the raft to impose on Jim's dignity—and the lacing he received for his efforts. It is inconceivable that Jim on the river would have sold his dignity. (Parenthetically, it should be noted that Tom is much worse than the King. The latter sold a body into physical slavery when he needed money badly. Tom, however, bought human dignity, out of mere whimsy. Likewise, it should not be overlooked how prices in the western world have gone up. Christ was worth only thirty pieces of silver; in Twain's good Christian America, however, bodies and souls came higher.)

Nor does Jim regain his dignity—his true human dignity—when he refuses to continue his flight and abandon the wounded Tom. Jim's impulse is completely unselfish but his reasoning is soft-headed. He says he cannot leave because under similar circumstances Tom would not abandon him. But the fact is that unless Tom could look upon staying as an adventure, he surely would leave: if he stayed it would be for self-aggrandizement. Jim says he will not leave until a doctor comes, "not if it's forty years!" There is nothing noble about a man who after being so debased as Jim has been looks upon his debaser as Moses, whom he is willing to suffer for forty years! There could hardly be a more scathing, and more typically Twainian, remark than Huck's editorializing: "I knew he was white inside, and I reckined he'd say what he did say." Huck, as we shall see, is at this time the alter ego of Tom. His voice is Tom's, his point of view is Tom's. Therefore his statements are twisted through all of Tom's ignorance and prejudice. All of this ignorance and prejudice is reflected in Huck's paying Jim the greatest compliment he can: declaring that, though black on the outside, he is white on the inside! This is the voice of the age and place.

This Jim is not sufficiently pure to accompany the real Huck on his search for personal freedom. Jim is now rich and complacent. He will undoubtedly be hoodwinked out of this fortune, as he was out of his first, but he will continue to fit into society. He will toady to St. Petersburg. Perhaps like Tom he will want to go on an adventure for a couple of weeks. But he is no better prepared than Tom is for Huck's odyssey.

There is no more pathetic, no more nearly tragic, figure in Twain's works than Jim. Like Huck he absorbs the traits of the society in which he lives. But there is a difference in the way and in the degree to which they absorb society. Jim is more passive than Huck. He is therefore lost. Legally free, he is condemned to the slavery of Tom's society for the rest of his life and to Tom's heaven after death. He is not capable of rising above what Twain liked to call, with both meanings, the "damned human race."

If we protest that Twain's sentence is too harsh, that Jim never really enjoyed equal opportunity with Huck, we probably echo Twain's feelings. Jim's fate was undoubtedly closely tied in with Twain's compulsion to overcompensate for the Negro in general: the compulsion which caused him to pay two Negroes' way through college and to insist that this was the debt he owed as a *white* person; the complex perhaps best revealed in Livy's advice to Mark, that in dealing with people, so that they be treated fairly, he should consider everybody colored until he was proved white. Unfortunately Jim *was* proved white.

III

THE THIRD THEME—Huck's escape from Pap—is equal in importance to the first. In many ways this escape requires stronger battle. Huck's attitude toward his father is as ambivalent as that toward St. Petersburg and Tom. Sometimes he prefers Pap's society to that of the town. It allows him to be more comfortable. When, for example, Pap takes him over to the cabin on the Illinois bank, Huck soon finds life "kind of lazy and jolly," there were "pretty good times," and he "didn't want to go back no more" (p. 22).

But generally Huck's revulsion toward Pap is greater than his attraction. Manifestly Pap represents the dregs of society. And Huck's attraction to St. Petersburg causes him to apologize for himself by laying the blame on Pap. Numerous times he excuses some bit of ignorance or some attitude by saying that he was not "brung up" as other folks were.

Far more important than this superficial attitude, however, is what Pap represents: something fundamental and primal; that is, he symbolizes Fatherhood. One aspect of Fatherhood—tyranny and physical restraint and punishment—Huck finds intolerable. To escape Pap's brutality he becomes respectable, allows himself to be adopted, gives up his fortune to Judge Thatcher, even seeks the wisdom of the fortune-telling hair-ball. When Pap gets "too handy with his hick'ry," at the cabin, Huck resorts to his extreme act, that of "killing" himself. Thus it can hardly be correct to state, as several critics say, that Huck is searching for a father; on the contrary, he is trying to escape the one he has.

It is hardly correct, either, to insist, as Leo Marx insists, that Huck has nothing to run from, that when on Jackson's Island he tells Jim "They're after us!" he unconsciously allies himself with the great stream of (controlled) humanity. On the contrary, Huck is desperately fleeing from Pap, who is very much after him. Only a few days before, the steamboat had come around the island firing the cannon to force Huck's corpse to rise to the surface, and next to the rail was the terrifying figure of Pap. He was sober. The last time Huck had seen him—paddling the canoe back to the cabin the time he "killed" himself—he was sober. Pap sober was a more formidable figure to elude than Pap drunk. If the slave-hunters came to Jackson's Island and discovered Jim, they would find Huck also, and would turn him over either to the town or to Pap. Either way he would live under the threat of Pap, who was determined to claim him by legal means or physical abduction.

As Huck and Jim float down the river, Pap is never far away. There are numerous tangible reminders. When Huck ran away from the cabin, he took everything that "was worth a cent," and all belonged to his father: gun, fishhooks, food, etc. When, because Huck wants to play a joke on his companion, Jim is bitten by a snake, Pap's presence is summoned up frighteningly. Jim drinks Pap's whisky until "the drunk begun to come," and Huck knows that Jim is "all right." In a sense, then, Pap saves Jim's life, and both Jim and Huck must be aware of it. But earlier associations with Pap's "forty-rod" obtrude on Huck's mind, and he says, "I'd druther been bit with a snake than pap's whisky" (p. 46).

Pap's influence extends long after the physical reminders are gone. Gliding down the river, Huck buys food in the villages they pass. But he *steals* chickens ("Pap always said, take a chicken when you get a chance"), and "borrows" watermelons, "mushmelons, and punkins" ("Pap always said it warn't no harm to borrow things"). Later, when the canoe has been lost, and the two realize their desperate need of one, Huck says that they intended to buy one, not "borrow it when there warn't anybody around, the way pap would do" (p. 80).

Again, when Huck is describing Colonel Grangerford as a gentleman well born, which is "worth as much as in man as it is in a horse," for substantiation of his comparison he cites as one authority Widow Douglas, and "pap he always said it, too" (p. 89). Later, when the King and Duke come aboard the raft, and the need for peace and harmony becomes obvious, Huck philosophizes: "If I never learnt nothing else out of pap, I learnt that the best way to get along with this kind of people is to let them have their own way" (p. 106). Finally, it should be noticed that in nearly every instance when Huck tells one of his lies to explain his presence somewhere he says that his family up-river or down-river has suffered some kind of disaster, and he begins his lament with reference to a father. Clearly his is a patriarchal society.

If Huck is to grow to his full stature as a man, he must realize that the weight of his father no longer bears down on him. This realization comes to him just before he is to make his greatest—and seemingly irrevocable—decision.

The climax of the novel does not extend throughout the last eleven chapters, which serve to carry on and intensify the development, but begins with the entry of Aunt Polly after the failure of the evasion. She reveals that Tom is really Huck, and Sid is really Tom. Her coming at this point—completely gratuitously—means that Twain wants to strip "Tom" of his false identity and thus to re-establish him as his true self. In other words, the masquerade—the past—is over, and the future lies open. Whatever Huck thinks or does from here on will be in his own name: he can no longer hide behind the cloak of anonymity or pseudonymity. He is pushed to the front *as himself*.

All the nonsense of the evasion, however, was carried out under a blanket of false identities. Huck was not himself; he was Tom Sawyer. Huck, therefore, is not personally responsible for the acts he committed while being Tom. The real Tom played the goody-goody-sissy Sid, whom in the past he has so despised. In Sid, Twain gives a picture of the future Tom. Thus, from this masquerade, we get a double or compound picture of the absurd world of Tom: Tom aided and abetted by an alter ego. We see doubly this world in its romantic, stupid, selfish, immoral, inhuman worst—where religion insists that Negroes are not people; where cruelty is practiced out of whimsy; where anybody—Jim included—can be bought for money or pleasure. It is Tom's world—of today and of tomorrow.

This evil world has had its attractions for Huck. He quickly became Tom's shadow, and soon found his role easy and comfortable. This role allowed Huck the luxury of being in rebellion without any of the dangers. Without perhaps fully realizing it, Huck is now faced with the greatest crisis of his life—of greater importance to his future in this world than that which gripped him when he had to decide Jim's fate.

The key to Huck's triumphal emergence into his true self lies in the last twenty-nine lines of the book. In these lines are woven the three strands I have discussed above, inseparable and inextricable.

Tom has just given Jim the forty dollars, and Jim is oozing self-congratulation. Tom then proposes that the three—he, Huck and Jim—"slide out of here, one of these nights, and get an outfit, and go for howling adventures amongst the Injuns, over in the Territory, for a couple of weeks or two." Huck agrees whole-heartedly, then remembers that he has no money to buy supplies. In this memory he brings to the surface one of the great fears that have haunted him for the last year: "It's likely pap's been back before now. . . ." Tom says that Pap has not returned; Jim reveals that it was Pap's corpse that was in the floating house on the river long ago.

Then there is a considerable lapse of time before the last paragraph. This passage of time is of utmost importance to Huck. The whole paragraph must be read closely:

> Tom's most well, *now*, and got his bullet around his neck on a watch-guard for a watch, and is always seeing what time it is, and so there ain't nothing to write about, and I am rotten glad of it, because if I'd a knowed what a trouble it was to make a book I wouldn't a tackled it and ain't agoing to no more. *But* I reckon I got to light out for the Territory *ahead of the rest*, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before. [My italics]

During the lapse of time between the penultimate and the last paragraphs Huck has had time to think over the situation. Before learning that Pap is dead, he agrees to go off with his fellow-citizens—even wants to go. But after being told that his father is dead, and after realizing his consequent release from the tension he felt while his father was alive, he has had time to think, time for the same kind of soul-searching he wrestled with before finally deciding to go to hell for Jim, and he has realized the absurdity of Tom's plan. Notice the revulsion with which Huck takes leave of the evil genius Tom: he has a bullet around his neck and is always flaunting it. Huck gladly parts with this jackanapes. Since he is parting with him forever, and since this escape was one of the major themes in the book, naturally "there ain't nothing to write about," and surely Huck is "rotten glad" to be done with Tom. Huck will not write another book, because he has no reason for another: he has found himself; his search for true self is ended.

Critics err in thinking that Huck wants to go west ahead of all other settlers, of all Civilization. Or they err in insisting that this is all Huck wants to escape. True, Twain from the vantage point of his Hartford mansion is becoming more and more soured on civilization in general. But *Huckleberry Finn* centers on the ante-bellum South, and the sins of this civilization are the immediate objects of Twain's hate. Therefore it is the civilization of St. Petersburg that Huck wants to flee. This civilization extends to the Phelps' farm. Its representative there is Aunt Sally —the soft-headed Aunt Sally who was so thoroughly and so easily duped by the shenanigans of the two Toms, who in her ineffectiveness is much worse than the Widow Douglas ever was. Having her try to civilize Huck would be pathetic beyond words. In fleeing all this world, Huck wants above all to get away from Tom and Jim because they personally symbolize all the Life that he now finds intolerable.

Huck realizes that he is now freed of all the restraints which hitherto have bound him. Tom and Pap have been cast off. Jim, the nearest true companion he ever knew, can journey with him no farther. But, most important, the world of these three holds no attraction for him. Intellectually and spiritually, as well as physically, he is free. Now he can exercise his freedom and continue his growth. He can be true to himself because there is no reason to be false to himself in order to be true to society.

The Sober Affirmation of Mark Twain's Hadleyburg

CLINTON S. BURHANS, JR.

TO SAY THAT "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" is one of Twain's finest and most significant works would probably provoke little argument among serious students of his writing. Curiously,

SOURCE: *Reprinted from* American Literature, *XXXIV (Nov. 1962), 375–384, by permission of the author and of the Duke University Press.*

however, there are almost no independent studies of this story, and where it is considered in general studies of Twain's art, it is usually given little more than passing attention as a cynical and pessimistic story reflecting the deepening despair of his later years. I think the story deserves more serious consideration by Twain critics, and I offer this essay as a beginning.

Praising the Hadleyburg story, A. B. Paine calls it "a tale that in its own way takes its place with the half-dozen great English short stories of the world,"[1] and DeLancey Ferguson declares that while "the short story, as an art form, was not Mark's metier . . . in 'The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg' he came near to perfection."[2] In contrast, Gladys Bellamy, though recognizing the story's power, feels that "for the thoughtful reader there is a mischief in it that keeps it from being altogether satisfying." She considers the story marred by inconsistencies stemming from two conflicting characteristics of Twain's mind—his determinism and his moralism. Twain, she says, establishes a deterministic framework to explain the motivation and behavior of his characters and then violates it illogically with "an implied theme of divine justice—the great theme of the judgment of God as it operates through the consciences of Mr. and Mrs. Richards. . . . There is no continuity of motivation, no steadiness of emotional effect, no philosophical unity to the story. In it the moralist gives an out-of-bounds blow to the determinist, and Hadleyburg settles itself on a philosophic quicksand."[3]

It seems to me, however, that Miss Bellamy's usually brilliant insight fails her here, for in this story Twain is consistent both logically and aesthetically. On the surface, the story is an attack on human greed and hypocrisy, but at its deeper levels it reflects Twain's return to the unresolved problems which had perplexed him in Huck Finn's moral conflict and an exploration of the possibility that experience can unify man's moral perceptions and his motivating emotions. In this context, Twain's concept of determinism, especially environmental determinism, or training, does not conflict with his moralism; on the contrary, his moralism functions here in terms of his determinism. Moreover, his view of conscience in this story[4] is not, as Miss Bellamy implies, that of the conventional religious moralist; it is far more complicated than this, synthesizing as it does the principal elements in his earlier concepts of conscience.

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[1] A. B. Paine, *Mark Twain: A Biography* (New York, 1912), III–IV, 1068.

[2] DeLancey Ferguson, *Mark Twain: Man and Legend* (New York, 1943), p. 278.

[3] Gladys Bellamy, *Mark Twain as a Literary Artist* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1950), pp. 308–309.

[4] Critical opinions on this aspect of Twain's story diverge widely. At one extreme, Alexander Jones feels that "in such works as 'The Man That Cor-

Twain's determinism in "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," far from being inconsistent with his moralism, is the source of its real values. In his concern in this story with the relations between conscience and the heart, he views the moral values of conscience as determined by environment, by training; and one of his major aims is to show that such training in moral values must be empirical, not merely prescriptive. The people of Hadleyburg try to preserve the honesty which has made them famous by training it into their young. They forget, however, that originally this honesty was not just an abstract ideal, but a principle developed and maintained empirically in constant action against the forces and temptations of dishonesty and therefore rooted by experience firmly among the motivating impulses of the heart. "It was many years ago," Twain writes. "Hadleyburg was the most honest and upright town in all the region around about. It had kept that reputation unsmirched during three generations, and was prouder of it than of any other of its possessions."[5]

So proud are the people of Hadleyburg of their reputation and so fearful of the slightest threat to it that they try to safeguard it not by the continued practice of honesty but rather by an attempt to exclude all temptations to dishonesty. The town "was so proud of it," Twain declares, "and so anxious to insure its perpetuation, that it began to teach the principles of honest dealing to its babies in the cradle, and made the like teachings the staple of their culture thenceforward through all the years devoted to their education. Also, throughout the formative years temptations were kept out of the way of the young people, so that their honesty could have every chance to harden and solidify, and become a part of their very bone" (p. 1). Hadleyburg has tried to create an environment in which the principles of honesty can be trained into the

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rupted Hadleyburg,' he assumed the existence of an inner moral standard which enables man to determine what is right, and this is essentially in agreement with the doctrines of Shaftesbury" ("Mark Twain and Religion," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1950, p. 223). At almost the other extreme, however, Leon Howard declares that Twain "implicitly denied the existence of an internal, incorruptible moral sense in his story 'The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg'" (*Literature and the American Tradition*, New York, 1960, p. 219).

[5] Mark Twain, *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg and Other Stories and Essays* (New York, 1917), p. 1. I will put subsequent page references to this text in the body of my essay.

young without the dangers involved in practicing them against inimical temptations. The fame of the town, the people feel, will thereby be secure.

But Hadleyburg's training is defective and artificial on at least two counts: in the first place, it is impossible to shield men forever from all temptations to dishonesty, and when inexorably they do arise, men unpracticed in recognizing and resisting them will succumb, as Richards does in failing to clear Burgess—a failure which foreshadows the fall of Hadleyburg. And in the second place, Hadleyburg forgets that man is determined by heredity as well as by environment, that human nature is potentially petty and selfish as well as noble and kind. Thus, when the town becomes obsessed with vanity over its empty and now unearned reputation, its preoccupation with preserving that reputation by excluding the temptations to dishonesty not only fails but also leaves other vices free to develop unchecked. When Richards tells his wife that " 'we have been trained all our lives long, like the whole village, till it is absolutely second nature to us to stop not a single moment to think when there's an honest thing to be done,' " she refutes him prophetically:

> Oh, I know it, I know it—it's been one everlasting training and training and training in honesty—honesty shielded, from the very cradle, against every possible temptation, and so it's *artificial* honesty, and weak as water when temptation comes, as we have seen this night. God knows I never had shade nor shadow of a doubt of my petrified and indestructible honesty until now—and now, under the very first big and real temptation, I—Edward, it is my belief that this town's honesty is as rotten as mine is; as rotten as yours is. It is a mean town, a hard, stingy town, and hasn't a virtue in the world but this honesty it is so celebrated for and so conceited about; and so help me, I do believe that if ever the day comes that its honesty falls under great temptation, its grand reputation will go to ruin like a house of cards. There, now, I've made confession, and I feel better; I am a humbug, and I've been one all my life, without knowing it. (pp. 15–16).

Obsessive vanity and insulated disuse, then, have made Hadleyburg's honesty artificial and hypocritical: much like Huck Finn's attitude toward slavery, it is largely an untested abstraction; it is almost entirely divorced from the townspeople's hearts. In short, the training of the people of Hadleyburg has shaped their consciences to an awareness of the moral ideal of honesty, but it has given them no experience in following the directions of conscience and therefore no true knowledge of its values.

Seeing in the people of Hadleyburg what they cannot see in themselves or, like the Richardses, see too late, the vindictive stranger directs his ingenious revenge at their most vulnerable spot—the greed for wealth and social position in hearts whose inexperience in resisting temptations to dishonesty has left them no answering passion for true honesty. That Hadleyburg falls, that all of the Nineteen succumb, is therefore not surprising. Nor is their subsequent sense of guilt, as reflected in the Richardses, at all inconsistent. Both are corollaries of Twain's concept of determinism; ironically, paradoxically, Hadleyburg's fall is determined by the abstract training which the people had counted on to keep them forever incorruptible; and their consciences, whose moral perceptions also stem from that training, cause them to feel guilt and shame.

In the end, of course, Hadleyburg learns the meaning of its mistakes: that only through experience can the moral perceptions of conscience be united with the emotions which motivate man. Moreover, this is also the significance of the story's central conflict as Twain develops it through the Richardses. From the beginning he defines this conflict largely in terms of the relationship between the Richardses' consciences and their hearts, an evolving relationship synthesizing most of his earlier concepts of conscience.

At times, Richards's conscience operates like Tom Sawyer's; that is, it makes moral distinctions and influences him to commensurate action. Learning that the town is planning to punish the Rev. Burgess for something which only Richards knows he did not do, Richards warns him. " 'When the thing was new and hot,' " he tells his wife, " 'and the town made a plan to ride him on a rail, my conscience hurt me so that I couldn't stand it, and I went privately and gave him notice, and he got out of the town and staid out till it was safe to come back' " (pp. 9–10). But Richards's training in honesty has been only prescriptive, and his conscience affects his actions only to the point at which they conflict with the desire for the good opinion of the town, which is the principal element in his basic emotion of self-approval. He warns Burgess privately, and almost at once regrets having saved him; he fears the town will find out and turn its dislike of Burgess against him. For, as Twain points out in the contemporaneous *What Is Man?*, "Corn-Pone Opinions," and "The United States of Lyncherdom," "the Sole Impulse which dictates and compels a man's every act: the imperious necessity of securing his own approval, in every emergency and at all costs,"[6] usually involves not only the disposition to do whatever will gain public approval but also

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[6] Mark Twain, *What Is Man? and Other Essays* (New York, 1917), p. 29.

"man's commonest weakness, his aversion to being unpleasantly conspicuous, pointed at, shunned, as being on the unpopular side." [7]

Reflecting Hadleyburg's defective training in honesty, Richards's moral ideals are in this crisis almost entirely separated from his motivating emotion of self-approval.[8] In addition to making him regret having saved Burgess, this basic emotion violates his conscience and prevents him from clearing the clergyman of the unjust accusation against him. " 'I am ashamed,' " Richards admits. " 'I was the only man who knew he was innocent. I could have saved him, and—and—well, you know how the town was wrought up—I hadn't the pluck to do it. It would have turned everybody against me. I felt mean, ever so mean; but I didn't dare; I hadn't the manliness to face that' " (pp. 8–9). Here, then, though its moral values and demands as well as the emotions it contends with are the reverse of Huck Finn's, Richards's conscience functions much like Huck's in that it exerts almost no influence on his actions but does punish him with a sense of guilt when he fails to obey it.

The stranger's bag of gold evokes in the Richardses and in the rest of the Nineteen the same conflict between the moral guidance and the demands of their consciences and the urgings of their emotions. Despite the warnings of his conscience, each is driven by his desires for wealth, security, and social position to rationalize and then to lie about his right to the gold. "All night long," Twain writes, "eighteen principal citizens did what their caste-brother Richards was doing at the same time—they put in their energies trying to remember what notable service it was that they had unconsciously done Barclay Goodson. In no case was it a holiday job; still they succeeded" (p. 28). Like Adam and Eve in Twain's version of their temptation and fall, the Nineteen "could not understand untried things and verbal abstractions which stood for matters outside of their little world and their narrow experience." [9]

The town meeting reveals the dishonesty of the rest of the Nineteen, but for the Richardses it means only more temptation and further conflict between the values and entreaties of their consciences and their passion for public favor. Twice again they are tempted and twice again they fall. When they think their dishonesty is going to be disclosed, they rise to confess and to plead for the town's forgiveness; but when the generous Burgess silences them and then fails to read Richards's note, they are "faint with joy and surprise" and no longer disposed to confess. " 'Oh, bless God,' " whispers Mary Richards, " 'we are saved!—he has lost ours—I wouldn't give this for a hundred of those sacks!' " (p. 50). Their desire for public approval completely overcomes the demands of their consciences that they confess and justly "suffer with the rest" (p. 49), and once more they succumb to the temptation to dishonesty.

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[7] Mark Twain, *Europe and Elsewhere* (New York, 1923), p. 243.

[8] The emphasis on public opinion in Richards's desire for self-approval can also be laid to his Hadleyburg training, to an environment, that is, in which the reputation for honesty, the public image of the town, has become an obsession.

[9] Twain, *Europe and Elsewhere*, pp. 344–345.

Nor is this all, for they compound their dishonesty when the town proposes to auction off the stranger's bag of gold and give the proceeds to them. Again, their consciences point out the Richardses' deceitfulness and urge them to confess: "at the beginning of the auction," Twain writes, "Richards whispered in distress to his wife: 'O Mary, can we allow it? It—it—you see, it is an honor-reward, a testimonial to purity of character, and—and—can we allow it? Hadn't I better get up and—O Mary, what ought we to do?—' " She, too, understands the moral implications and requirements of their position and replies, " 'it is another temptation, Edward—I'm all in a tremble—but, oh, we've escaped *one* temptation, and that ought to warn us to— . . . O Edward . . . we are *so* poor!—but—but—do as you think best—do as you think best.' " This, however, is precisely what he does not do; "Edward fell," Twain declares, "—that is, he sat still; sat with a conscience which was not satisfied, but which was overpowered by circumstances" (pp. 55–56), circumstances of wealth and an intoxicating public admiration.

As the incitements to dishonesty become more tempting, then, conscience in the Richardses, as in the Hadleyburg they reflect, diminishes as an effective moral and ethical force; and finally, much as Twain defines it in *What Is Man?*, it has no moral and ethical function at all. For a while the consciences they have violated cause the Richardses to feel some last glimmerings of guilt and shame and regret: Richards decides to resign his position at the bank, feeling that he can no longer trust himself with other people's money; and both he and his wife are made profoundly miserable by Stephenson's note praising their honesty. But these feelings soon die, and the Richardses' sense of guilt becomes a matter not of morality but of exposure; "within twenty-four hours after the Richardses had received their checks," Twain writes, "their consciences were quieting down, discouraged; the old couple were learning to reconcile themselves to the sin which they had committed. But they were to learn, now, that a sin takes on new and real terrors when there seems a chance that it is going to be found out. This gives it a fresh and most substantial and important aspect" (p. 64).

Fearing the exposure of their dishonesty, the Richardses are no longer concerned with the moral values and responsibilities of their situation. The separation between their ideal of honesty and their motivating emotions is now complete, and their consciences lose all moral and ethical function and become in effect identical with the Richardses' self-approval in its passion for public approval. Conscience now moves the Richardses only to a suspicion that others know about their dishonesty and to fear that someone will disclose it, particularly the suspicion that Burgess knows of Richards's failure long ago to reveal his innocence and the fear that he intends to revenge himself by exposing them.[10]

Tortured beyond endurance, the Richardses sicken and die, but not from any Divine punishment reflected in the agonies of a guilty conscience. They die because they cannot abide the knowledge that their good name may be destroyed and that they may be held up to an even greater obloquy than the rest of the Nineteen. In short, they are no longer aware of sin and guilt as matters of moral principle and individual responsibility; self-approval is their conscience, and its demand for public favor renders them obsessed, like the town they mirror, with the name of honesty at the cost of its essence, which would mean, as Richards realizes in the town meeting, confessing publicly that they have been as dishonest as the others.

Before the Richardses die, however, Twain reveals that they have not suffered barrenly. Their racking fear that their dishonesty will be exposed has rooted the knowledge of that dishonesty deeply in their hearts; through experience, the self-approval which is their conscience has learned moral and ethical responsibility and now makes moral distinctions which result in commensurate action. In Richards, as Twain in Huck Finn implies they must, conscience and the heart, moral perception and motivating emotion, at last function together. Richards's ideal of honesty is rooted in his heart, in the self-approval which governs his actions, and he dies an honest man.

Concerned anew with moral values, he destroys the checks which have cost him so dearly; " 'they came from Satan,' " he tells the nurse. " 'I saw the hell-brand on them, and I knew they were sent to betray me to sin' " (p. 67).[11] His self-approval now demands behavior consistent with moral rectitude, and he wants the essence of honesty, not its mere reputation. With his last breath, he admits his guilt—not privately, as in what he had told his wife about Burgess, but openly in a public avowal. " 'I want witnesses,' " he declares. " 'I want you all to hear my confession, so that I may die a man, and not a dog. I was clean—artificially—like the rest; and like the rest I fell when temptation came. I signed a lie, and claimed the miserable sack' " (p. 68). Moreover, though he thinks Burgess has exposed him, Richards admits his cowardly failure to save the clergyman from undeserved disgrace.

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[10] The change in the nature and function of conscience in Richards is illustrated in this change in his attitude toward Burgess. Earlier, his conscience had led him to feel ashamed of his failure to clear Burgess; now, however, it moves him only to fear Burgess as a threat to his reputation for honesty.

[11] The evolution in Richards's conscience and its relation to his heart is reflected in this change in his reason for wanting to destroy the checks. When his conscience had lost its moral functions and become identical with his amoral desire for self-approval, he considered the checks a temptation not in moral terms but only as a threat to his reputation; thus, he declares that " 'we mustn't

Experience has made Richards's conscience a highly complex faculty in which moral perception and direction and the motivating emotion of self-approval work together to produce real honesty—honesty which is not simply allegiance to an abstract principle, but honesty expressed in practice against the temptations of dishonesty.[12] Nor is this lesson lost upon Hadleyburg, which learns fully and well what the Nineteen and particularly the Richardses exemplify: the town's new motto, "Lead Us Into Temptation," is not an invitation to sin, but a means to grapple with

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be tempted' " and wants to burn the checks because they are " 'a trick to make the world laugh at *us*, along with the rest' " (p. 61). Now, however, he destroys them as a temptation which conflicts with his renewed and more profound moral perceptions.

[12] This view that the real knowledge of abstract moral values is determined by environment, or training, that only empirically can the essential unity of conscience and the heart be secured, is a central element in Twain's moralism and appears in a variety of forms throughout his generally inconsistent moral thought. In addition to its vital influence on many of his finest literary works, it is suggested in such philosophical writings as *What Is Man?*, especially in the idea that the heart can be trained to act by higher ideals, and implied in many remarks throughout Twain's writing. Thus, in a letter to Henry Ward Beecher in 1885, Twain exclaims, "how I do hate those enemies of the human race who go around enslaving God's people with *pledges*—to quit drinking instead of to quit wanting to drink" (*Mark Twain's Letters,* A. B. Paine, ed., New York, 1917, II, 459). The Connecticut Yankee feels that the common man in King Arthur's England needs "a new deal," and he would like to start a revolution for that purpose. "But I knew," the Yankee reflects, "that the Jack Cade or the Wat Tyler who tries such a thing without first educating his materials up to revolution grade is almost absolutely certain to get left" (*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court,* New York, 1917, p. 108). And in his essay "My First Lie, and How I Got Out of It," Twain writes that when he was a baby he got the attentions he wanted by crying as though a pin were sticking him. Soon, however, a safety-pin put an end to his infantile dishonesty. "But," he argues, "is that reform worth anything? No; for it is reform by force and has no virtue in it; it merely stops that form of lying; it doesn't impair the disposition to lie, by a shade. It is the cradle application of conversion by fire and sword, or of the temperance principle through prohibition" (*The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg,* p. 160).

it empirically. Whatever its new name may be, Hadleyburg is truly "an honest town once more, and the man will have to rise early that catches it napping again" (p. 69).

"The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" is therefore neither as inconsistent nor as pessimistic as it is usually considered. In it are reflected the major aspects of Twain's conflicting moral thought—moral values as abstract, moral values as empirical; conscience as the reflector of moral values, conscience as the amoral emotion of self-approval—but these conflicting ideas are reconciled by Twain's determinism into a formal and thematic unity which generates substantial beauty and power. Moreover, the story is in fact less pessimistic than soberly optimistic; it ends, after all, not with the greed, hypocrisy, and cynicism of the town meeting, but with the development of a significant conscience in Richards and in the affirmation of Hadleyburg's new motto. And if Twain shows man as a deterministic creature driven by vanity and greed, he also shows that this is neither the complete nor the final answer to the question of man, that the experience of living can determine man to his salvation as well as to his perdition.

In "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," then, Twain declares with Milton that "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. That virtue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an excremental whiteness. . . ."[13] Again, Twain argues with Conrad's Stein that " 'the way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up. . . . In the destructive element immerse. . . .' "[14] In "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," Twain's divergent moral and ethical ideas merge in a view of man which places Twain within a great and a positive tradition.

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[13] Maynard Mack, ed., *Milton* (New York, 1953), p. 81.

[14] Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (London, 1953), p. 156.

Henry James

Henry James and the Nature of Evil

J. A. Ward

Evil in James's fiction is not so much a problem as it is an inexorable, ever-present reality that cripples and destroys; it is present at the basis of every human situation, and it is at least latent in the soul of every man. It is unquestioned and undefined, manifest in its effects, not in its causes. Critics frequently describe James as having a "sense of evil," (rather than an "idea of evil," or a "concept of evil"); and the term is accurate, for it suggests that to James evil is obscure and indefinite. In his works the reaction to evil often strikes us as vague and unrelated to specific action or character, or we may feel, as Yvor Winters towards some of the novels, that the sense of evil far exceeds what the present situation merits.[1] This sense of evil in James, this "imagination . . . clouded by the Pit," as Graham Greene[2] terms it, is based on or is equivalent to an imaginative recognition of the fact of Original Sin.

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[1] *Maule's Curse* (Norfolk, Conn., 1938), pp. 187–216.
[2] *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays* (New York, 1952), p. 26.

Source: *Reprinted from* Twentieth Century Literature, *VI (July 1960), 65–69, by permission of the author and of the publisher, Alan Swallow.*

James's acceptance of "some terrible aboriginal catastrophe"[3] that made evil, if not natural to man and the world, certainly unavoidable, takes the form in his novels of what theologians term "sin" rather than of what they term "evil," or of "moral evil" rather than "natural evil." Natural evil, which is beyond human control, the caprices and cataclysms of nature, the unavoidable facts of disease and death, is an irrelevance in James's fiction. It is of course an accepted reality, and instances of it set many of his stories in motion: the illness and death of Ralph Touchett and Milly Theale and such circumstantial misfortunes as the poverty of Kate Croy and Merton Densher are central factors in James's plots. But such matters are never treated for their own value, as they would be by a naturalist. James has so little concern for natural evil that he very often makes death the result of moral rather than of natural evil—as in *The Wings of the Dove*, "The Author of Beltraffio," and "The Death of the Lion," in which the deaths through natural causes of Milly Theale, Mark Ambient, and Neil Paraday symbolize the spiritual suffering caused by unwarranted human intervention. Other deaths, like those of May Bartram in "The Beast in the Jungle" and Mrs. Pynsent in *The Princess Casamassima*, are of little emotional or thematic value in themselves; they are necessary simply to accentuate moral situations. May Bartram's death causes John Marcher to realize that his life has been a spiritual death; the death of Mrs. Pynsent makes it possible for Hyacinth Robinson to visit the continent and thereby gain a new awareness.

In James's fiction man is not in a condition of absolute depravity, but he possesses a latent capacity for evil, which if realized, can blacken his entire nature and the lives of those about him as well. Perhaps at the center, then, of James's treatment of evil is this imaginative awareness of "the sin that dwelleth within me," the strange and horrible existence of latent sin. James rarely treats this sense of potential personal evil in his fiction directly, but it lies at the center of many of his ghost stories, in which the ghosts stand for man's terrible hidden self. The central passage in James's work suggesting his consciousness of personal evil is contained in his autobiographical volume *A Small Boy and Others*, in which he describes

> the most appalling yet most admirable nightmare of my life. The climax of this extraordinary experience . . . was the sudden pursuit, through an open door, along a huge saloon, of a just dimly-described figure that retreated in terror before my rush and dash (a glare of

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[3] John Henry Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (New York, 1947), p. 220.

> inspired reaction from irresistible but shameful dread,) out of the room I had a moment before been desperately, and all the more abjectly, defending by the push of my shoulder against hard pressure on lock and bar from the other side. The lucidity, not to say the sublimity, of the crisis had consisted of the great thought that I, in my appalled state, was probably still more appalling than the awful agent, creature or presence, whatever he was, whom I had guessed, in the suddenest wild start from sleep, the sleep within my sleep, to be making for my place of rest.[4]

The pattern of the terrified person finding himself ever more terrifying than the hideous monster who confronts him is a buried motif in much of James's fiction. For example, in *The Ambassadors* Strether's confrontation of Chad is a case in which the appalled person is ultimately revealed as "still more appalling than the awful agent. . . ." In *The Ambassadors* Strether carries with him the evil of the New England conscience; in *The Awkward Age* the character paralleling James in his nightmare is Vanderbank, whose sin is pride: in each case, and in many others, the character who in the beginning seems the victim emerges as the source of evil. Thus James's treatment of evil invariably involves the opposition of appearance and reality, the revelation that manners are not morals and that righteousness is not virtue.

James regularly makes evil latent and unconscious of itself. It is often a power beyond will, beyond knowledge, beyond identity. It is this obscure and irrational quality in his sense of evil that links James to modern novelists like Kafka, whose Joseph K. is on trial for an unnamed, unknown crime of which he yet is guilty. It also links him to the diarists of the Puritan theocracy, who relentlessly reflected on their own sins, and to Hawthorne, many of whose characters were obsessed by their own guilt. The common denominator in all these writers is a representation of the fact of Original Sin.

A resemblance that James noted between Hawthorne and the Puritans also holds true for his own fiction: "To him as to them, the consciousness of *sin* was the most importunate fact of life."[5] Evil in James is rarely isolated from the personal consciousness of it: either the subjective response of the disinterested observer (as in "The Two Faces"), the consciousness of the victim (as in *The American*), or, though rarely, the consciousness of the guilty person (as in "Mora Montravers").

Though James seems to be in the Puritan tradition in his subjective

[4] *A Small Boy and Others* (New York, 1913), pp. 347–348.

[5] *Hawthorne* (New York, 1879), p. 4.

treatment of evil, there are some important modifications and changes of emphasis in his works. James tends to concentrate on the good man's reaction to evil, rather than on the guilty man's obsession with his own sin. Thus the vision of evil in James more often resembles that of, say, Hilda in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*, the innocent made aware of evil, than it resembles the concern of Miriam with her own guilt. When James allows the reader to see into the mind of a villain, his emphasis differs from Hawthorne's. He is little interested in the sinner's sense of morality or in his feelings of guilt after the sin. Like most of the villains, the Bellegardes in *The American* and Gilbert Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady* are never dealt with subjectively. We are permitted to see into the mind of Kate Croy, the instigator of the plot against Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*, but we find no concern with sin or guilt. We perceive the subjective moral condition of her accomplice, Merton Densher, only when he regains the will to assert his temporarily suppressed sense of decency. In *The Golden Bowl* neither Charlotte Stant (whose mind we are not allowed to enter) nor Prince Amerigo seems conscious of his guilt. Nor is there any apparent struggle between will and conscience in these characters; the perpetrators of the evil cease their disruptive affair not because, like Arthur Dimmesdale of *The Scarlet Letter*, they are too burdened by conscience to continue, but simply because they are defeated by the strategy of Maggie Verver.

The evil character in James is almost never reflective. The characters who fully understand a situation are reduced to inactivity because of their knowledge. This knowledge is mainly a moral awareness that enables the perceiver to grasp the full implications of a situation and thus to recognize the moral limitations of any sort of private action. In this respect James is an Aristotelian: to him will is subservient to intellect; behavior and thought must be in accordance. Nearly all the James characters who have achieved total moral awareness are markedly passive; their sole action is to accept their conditions. They renounce escape, revenge, marriage, or any other course of action which would relieve pain or improve their situations. The less perceptive characters, on the other hand, are limited to a selfish view of life, and as a result their wills control them. As James says of "the awful Mona Brigstock" of *The Spoils of Poynton*, she is "*all* will, without the smallest leak of force into taste or tenderness or vision, into any sense of shades or relations or proportion." [6] In James's fiction it is nearly axiomatic that the good are reflective and passive, and the evil irreflective and active.

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[6] *The Art of the Novel*, ed. R. P. Blackmur (New York, 1934), pp. 64–65.

Though his villains are usually active, evil to James is a negation. In this respect James, more in the tradition of Aquinas and Emerson [7] than of Hawthorne and Melville, deviates from the modified Manicheanism prevalent in much of American literature.[8] In James's fiction evil is not an active principle in the universe; there is no "evil according to nature" and no devotion to evil for its own sake. The James character who injures others does so through pursuit of good. James does not characterize pure egotism, as does Hawthorne; rather he delineates characters whose perception is limited—to art, as with Osmond; to social decorum, as with Mme. Merle; to material goods, as with Mona Brigstock; or to physical passion, as with Ida Farange. Evil comes through the imperception of those who either do not recognize or ignore the effects of their activity on others. Thus Osmond's devotion to aesthetics, in itself a good, brings misery to his wife.

Furthermore, evil in James rarely exists beyond human relationships. Occasionally in the early international tales, melodramatic techniques lead James to invest a particular family or civilization with a pervasive miasma, suggestive of ineradicable evil; but in these cases action and setting conflict. In "Madame de Mauves," for example, James suggests meaning through scene; he depicts rather than dramatizes an evil considerably more extreme than the transgressions of Richard de Mauves —his marrying for money and his infidelity—seem to warrant.

The house of Pyncheon and the house of Usher symbolize hereditary evil inevitably destroying each member of the family. Unlike Hawthorne or Poe, however, James does not treat evil beyond the level of psychology. Even in *The American*, James's most melodramatic novel, hereditary evil operates merely as an inclination, not a compulsion, which can be rejected by each member of the Bellegarde family. In this novel there is but limited effectiveness in the horror of the family curse and the Gothic murder; nor is much gained by the imagery of coldness, darkness, and complexity which suggests the evil that surrounds the house in both time and space. James conveys the evil of the Bellegardes more effectively through the moral choices of Valentin and Claire, who renounce the freedom offered by Newman to accept freely their family code.

Evil in James's world is ubiquitous only in the sense that it is latent in every man. Nevertheless, it is unavoidable; it derives from the fundamental human condition of limited perception. Thus evil has its source in a part of existence more permanent and fundamental than the vice of individuals. It manifests itself in the harmful domination of one person over another. Such personal violation, described by James as "omnivorous egotism"[9] is James's version of Hawthorne's "Unpardonable Sin" and the major evil in his works.

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[7] For a discussion of the similarity of Emerson's conception of evil to that of Aquinas, see Newton Arvin, "The House of Pain: Emerson and the Tragic Sense," *Hudson Review*, XII (Spring, 1959), pp. 37-53. [See Browne and Light, Vol. I—Eds.]

[8] See Richard Chase, *The American Novel and its Tradition* (New York, 1957), p. 11.

James inevitably compounds the sin of personal violation by associating it with betrayal. Gilbert Osmond, Paul Muniment, Rose Armiger, Kate Croy and nearly all the malefactors in James are Judas-like in exploiting and destroying those whose confidence they have gained. Improper intervention in the life of another is virtually the only sin that interested James. Specific human actions, considered in isolation from other matters, are never in themselves evil (in this respect James is a moral relativist); the only criterion is the injury of another person. But in James's world of complex social relationships, human action does not take place in a vacuum, and the choice of one person inevitably results in either relief or pain for others. Thus, most deceptions (like Kate Croy's and Merton Densher's in *The Wings of the Dove*), most thefts (like Haughty Vint's in *The Ivory Tower*), and most adulteries (like Beale Farange's in *What Maisie Knew*) take their human tolls.

Though James alters the traditional Puritan consideration of evil by focusing on the sinned-against rather than the sinner, he perhaps even more than Hawthorne reflects a Puritan view of life in the dominant pattern of his novels, his view of life as a kind of pilgrimage. We are perhaps reminded of Bunyan or the New England historians in following a James hero through his experience, in which he is called upon to exercise supreme moral discrimination on a road beset with evil. Like Milton, James rejected the notion of a "cloistered virtue" and sent his innocents into the world to prove themselves; not simply to resist temptation but to encounter experience, to face evil, to suffer, to endure, to exercise and retain the moral view of life, and by doing so ultimately to achieve salvation. Obviously the doctrinal ideas of the Puritan allegories and historians are not present in James, but his view of life as the trial of the individual is essentially the same.

The notion of life as a trial is implicitly related to one of James's primary themes: the necessity of experience. The exhortation of Strether to Bilham in *The Ambassadors* to "live" is neither a plea for hedonism nor for aestheticism, and certainly not for personality development through a variety of secular experiences. James's principle of experience represents a belief in the expansion of consciousness, for the subjective life of the individual, his reflections and recognitions, his emotional responses to experience, comprise the essential life of James's fiction. The maturing of the moral consciousness through experience enables James's heroes and heroines to triumph over evil spiritually though they are otherwise defeated by it. Proper moral growth can only occur with the encounter with evil. Though the exposure of the innocent to evil involves loss and suffering, the result—the expanded consciousness—represents an ultimate victory. The acquired wisdom, however, in no way negates the ugliness of the evil which helped bring it about. James's fiction reflects, if not the synthesis, certainly the co-existence of a Puritan concern with evil and a Transcendentalist concern with experience.

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[9] *Hawthorne*, p. 132.

The American as a Young Lady

CHRISTOF WEGELIN

Howells called James "the inventor" of the "international American girl," and indeed, with only a few exceptions, the protagonists in James's stories of the American experience of Europe are young girls, self-reliant, independent, American.[1] Thus the heroine of "Travelling Companions" (1870), his earliest "international" story, already anticipates Daisy Miller. And in "The Last of the Valerii" (1874) the contrast between the American heroine and her Italian husband, even in some of its phraseology, points forward all the way to *The Golden Bowl* of 1904: "The Conte Valerio's grandeur was doubtless nothing for a young American girl who had the air and almost the habits of a princess, to sound her trumpet about; but she was desperately in love with him, and

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[1] William Dean Howells, *Heroines of Fiction* (New York and London, 1901), II, 165–66. Among the novels, *The American* and *The Ambassadors* form the only exceptions to this scheme.

Source: *From* The Image of Europe in Henry James, *pp. 56–59, 61–80, by Christof Wegelin. © 1958 by Southern Methodist University Press, publishers. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publisher.*

not only her heart, but her imagination was touched." The largess of a princess and the active imagination are the qualities which more and more came to distinguish James's "international American girl," and the one who marries the Conte Valerio has them both.

There were several reasons for James's partiality, among them doubtless the impression made on him by his cousin Minny Temple. Deeply affected by her death at the age of twenty-five, he wrote in 1870: "The more I think of her the more perfectly satisfied I am to have her translated from this changing realm of fact to the steady realm of thought. There she may bloom into a beauty more radiant than our dull eyes avail to contemplate." He had a presentiment that "her image" would "preside" in his "intellect." And the qualities he saw in her are indeed the ones which basically animate all of his American heroines: she was "a divinely restless spirit"; she incorporated for him the "moral spontaneity" which, he felt, distinguished American women from English. She was "an experiment of nature" and "a plant of pure American growth." She was, in short, the feminine counterpart of nature's nobleman or, in the words of his later formula, of the "heir of all the ages."[2]

But there were other, less personal, reasons why James represented America so consistently by its young women. His addiction to treating international social conflict in terms of marriage, in the first place, quite simply reflected a historical fact. In the years following the Civil War. intermarriage became an increasingly prominent, even notorious, feature of the social relations between America and Europe. And for reasons suggested by Mark Twain's repeated outbreaks against American "cringing" before nobility, against Newport, Rhode Island, as a "stud farm" of aristocracy, an "auction mart where the English nobilities come to trade hereditary titles for American girls and cash," the international marriage was almost invariably a marriage of the American woman to the European man.[3] It took this form so commonly, in fact, that when

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[2] The passages from the letters James wrote at the time of Minny Temple's death are conveniently assembled in Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Untried Years* (Philadelphia, 1953), pp. 324–31 *passim;* though see also *Letters,* I, 26. Edel makes a detailed and strong case for the great influence James's memory of Minny Temple had on his work. In explaining why Milly Theale of *The Wings of the Dove* had to be American, James says in the preface: "I had from far back mentally projected a certain sort of young American as more the 'heir of all the ages' than any other young person whatever" (*Art of the Novel,* p. 292), and indeed as early as 1884 he made Jackson Lemon in "Lady Barbarina" apply the same phrase to himself.

[3] Dixon Wecter has documented the fact in *The Saga of American Society: A Record of Social Aspirations, 1607–1937* (New York, 1937). Mark Twain's

James wrote "Lady Barbarina," his one story of a marriage which goes the other way, he felt he had "to forge the very documents" of the case. As a rule, he stuck to the situation supplied by life.

Moreover, there were the limitations of James's upbringing by a father who feared that preparation for a career might narrow the minds of his boys, and who felt that to be a good human being was career enough for any man. In speaking of some of his early international stories, James therefore had to confess that he lacked "the particular initiation" into American life which would have enabled him to deal with the figures surrounding the American girl, the various "male appendages," always "thinkable only as the American 'business-man,' " and the older women, the American mothers—types, both, characterized for him primarily by their "inveterate blankness of surface." He confessed that, in them, all he was prepared to deal with was the "negative" side—their state of bewilderment, their helplessness in the face of European life, *their* lack of preparation for any but the most superficial relation with Europe as with an amusing and expensive toy, which performed for a charge but to which, in consequence, one was in no need to feel any responsibility. Hence, since he meant to treat the positive side of the spectacle, too, his exclusive concern with the young American girl was simply a result of his partial disability—simply, as he put it, a matter of being "shut up to what was left." For in the American girl in Europe, the characteristic American "blankness" of surface often underwent "a sea-change"; the innocence which in her elders all too often seemed mere destitution of knowledge, in her turned into the grace of youth so that "negatives were converted and became in certain relations lively positives and values." [4]

Fundamentally James's American girl is merely the American variety of a type to which, quite independent of international contrast, he liked to assign the role of the protagonist in the struggle which is central in his work, the struggle of the individual to protect his integrity and freedom against violation by the world. Almost all his heroines are engaged in a more or less outright and usually admirable conflict with the established

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words are to be found in *Mark Twain's Notebook,* ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York and London, 1935), p. 336 (see also p. 209), and *Mark Twain in Eruption,* ed. Bernard DeVoto (New York and London, 1940), p. 273. James's remark is in the preface to Vol. XIV of the New York Edition (see *Art of the Novel,* p. 204).

[4] Preface to Vol. XII of the New York Edition; see *Art of the Novel,* pp. 187–93, *passim.* For James's phrases quoted in the next paragraph see *ibid.,* pp. 187–88, and *Letters,* I, 26.

order in which they live, from such early stories as "At Isella" (1871), whose Italian heroine revolts against the law which imposes obedience to the husband, to so late a novel as *The Outcry* (1911), whose English heroine rebels against the barren pride of an aristocracy which seems to have outlived its reason for being. What distinguishes all these women is that "moral spontaneity" which Minny Temple had had to such a high degree and which, in the words of one of his letters, sets them all off from the surrounding "realm of the cut and dried." But since they are often "innocent," too, since they illustrate the unawareness of life which struck him as "the most general appearance" of his compatriots in Europe, the young American girl became his primary symbol of the positive aspects of the American character.

The problem of the dual nature of "innocence" glanced at in such remarks, as well as its counterpart, the dual nature of "knowledge," of course transcends international contrasts. But in James's rendering of international conflict, "innocence" is to be found invariably on the American, "knowledge" on the European side, and the gradual change of his interpretation and evaluation of innocence and knowledge becomes therefore a reliable measure of the values which he attributed to Europe and America. A corollary of this change is his shift from comedy of manners, as in "An International Episode" (1878–79), to moral tragedy, as in *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), though often James does not keep the genres clearly separated, though "Daisy Miller" is a comedy whose heroine dies and *The Portrait of a Lady* is tragic despite the fact that its heroine lives. What matters more than life or death is the grounds on which James arouses our sympathy for the American girl, the causes of her ordeal as well as the fortitude with which she meets it. They constitute her story and, since she is the central symbol of the positive qualities he saw in America, the story of his own relation to Europe and America.

. . . . .

The classic example of this ordeal of the American girl at the hands of her Europeanized compatriots is of course the story of "Daisy Miller" (1878), based on a difference between American and European manners, between the freedom allowed American girls and the strict rules of propriety imposed upon European *jeunes filles*, but not centrally concerned with it. For Daisy's troubles are not caused by Europeans; it is her compatriots of the hotel world and the expatriate colonies who misunderstand and plague her, and this for two reasons which James carefully separates. The majority of them, the women who set the social tone, are motivated largely by the convert's zeal to advertise his conversion: they ostracize her, as we are told, "for the benefit of observant Europeans," in order to prove their own proficiency in the rules of the social "system" they have adopted, in order to leave no doubt that they are fully aware how "monstrous" the American freedoms of Daisy's conduct are. They are social snobs pure and simple. Mrs. Costello is typical, in all but the fact that her perch on the social ladder not only in Rome but, much more telling, in Washington and New York, was built long ago and high. Her fondness of "the minutely hierarchical constitution" of society is consequently deep, her eye for the social value of others unerring. It tells her at a glance that Daisy and her mother are "the sort of Americans one does one's duty" by "not accepting." Daisy "has that charming look that they all have," those free American girls, but Mrs. Costello "can't think where they pick it up"; and Daisy "dresses in perfection," but Mrs. Costello "can't think where they get their taste." For Daisy is a young lady who treats her mamma's courier "like a gentleman," and therefore, charm or no charm, taste or no taste, the "widow with a fortune" cannot accept her: "I would if I could," she says magnanimously, "but I can't."

So much for snobbery. But Winterbourne, the young American through whose eyes the reader largely sees Daisy, is no snob. His relation to her is determined by the question what her freedoms represent, whether she is "innocent" or not. And he misjudges her because he has lived abroad so long that "his instinct for such a question" is muddled, and his "reason" can only mislead him. So that his failure of judgment, too, is the result of a peculiarly American entanglement in the conflict of manners, a fact which becomes suddenly clear in the ironic end of the story. Giovanelli, the shabby Italian fortune hunter whose freely accepted attentions are what most compromises Daisy in the eyes of the American matrons and finally even of Winterbourne, ironically turns out to be the only one capable of recognizing and appreciating her innocence, and this in spite of the fact that it wears a color which in the women of his own country signifies something quite different. If this is linked with the suggestion that Daisy's innocence reveals to Giovanelli moral possibilities unknown in "the cynical streets of Rome," interesting as the implication may be as a foreshadowing of the later theme of *The Golden Bowl,* it has no part in James's central concern here. For in "Daisy Miller" his subject is not the possible contrast between American and Italian manners, although that provides the fuel for the dramatic conflict.

His theme is what in the *Notebooks* he described as "the eternal question of American snobbishness abroad," [5] and the moral issue inherent in it is the death of individual responsibility at the hands of convention.

To say this, however, is to be more solemn than the story warrants. For it is a comedy, and this not only because it portrays the enemy of the spirit much more sharply than the spirit itself. Daisy has after all something of the foolish about her in addition to what she has of the brave. And when Howells said that "while her youth lasts she is an angelic, a divine fool, with caprices that have the quality of inspirations," [6] he gave her credit for something which some of her sisters among James's freely adventuring American maidens may demonstrate, but which in her we have to take very much for granted. Daisy's virtues are courage and a stubbornness which amounts to endurance, and it may be only fair to assume that they are nourished by some bright inner flame; but James does not tell us what that flame feeds on, what the source of Daisy's power of resistance is. The simple fact is that "Daisy Miller" is first of all a document of social relations, like "Pandora" or "The Siege of London," comedies whose American heroines also raise the question of innocence because their conduct, like Daisy's, is seen through the puzzled consciousness of a member of the world of convention. Significantly, it is in connection with those stories that James mentions her in the *Notebooks*, not in connection with, say, *The Portrait of a Lady*, despite the fact that Isabel Archer, its heroine, belongs to the same independent, protestant, nonconformist sisterhood. James's characterization of Isabel, in his preface to her story, as "an intelligent but presumptuous girl" affronting her destiny,[7] might well be applied to Daisy, but the difference between the two stories is that Isabel's is seen from within; hence—since it, too, is the story of an ordeal—the tragic tone, which Daisy's story, despite her death, entirely lacks.

While "Daisy Miller" grew from the author's sense of a social situation, of a set of relations, a sense which led more or less naturally to comedy of manners, the germ of *The Portrait of a Lady* was wholly in his sense of the heroine's character. And the specific problem—since, as he said, "millions of presumptuous girls, intelligent or not intelligent, daily affront their destiny"—was how to make her story interesting. James's solution was logical and typical: it was to "place the centre of the subject in the young woman's own consciousness"; it was to focus constantly on the question, "what will she *do?*" It was quite simply to *make* her character interesting. The type was there; you met the free American girl in Europe wherever you looked; her charm was "inextinguishable." Daisy Miller demonstrated it, Bessie Alden did, Aurora Church tried to account for it when she protested that an American girl was not a *jeune fille* but "an intelligent responsible creature." Others were to demonstrate it; and some few exceptions, like Miss Ruck of "The Pension Beaurepas" and later Selina Wing of "A London Life" (1888), by demonstrating the possible limitations of the type and the dangers to which it was exposed when the charm had to subsist on "a very light substance," [8] largely served to prove the rule. But to make the charm of the American girl do for interest, one had to "translate her into the highest terms" of her formula "and as nearly as possible moreover into *all* of them." This, the core of the preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, is James's account of the origins of Isabel Archer, and explains why it is that we have to go to her portrait in order to understand the nature of the "inspirations" which Howells believed to be animating Daisy Miller's caprices.

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[5] P. 167. For another reference to the subject see p. 176.

[6] *Heroines of Fiction*, II, 173.

[7] *Art of the Novel*, p. 48.

The Portrait of a Lady, however, is not alone a summation of what James had come to see as the positive qualities which contact and conflict with Europe could bring out in the American character. Incorporated in its texture and thereby contributing to the projection of the heroine's experience are many of the conventional elements which were part of the history of that contact. Above all, there is Henrietta Stackpole, the American lady reporter whom James uses as a means to dramatize, ironically but sympathetically nevertheless, certain phases of the American tradition of democratic criticism of Europe. It has long been her desire to come to Europe to report to her countrymen in a series of letters "from the radical point of view," an enterprise, as James tells us, "the less difficult as she knew perfectly in advance what her opinions would be and to how many objections most European institutions lay open." She is aggressively suspicious of all that smacks of privilege and class, and most of all of American prostration before European standards. But she finds, poor Henrietta, that her most popular letters are those from romantic Spain, one of which in particular, dated from Irving's Alhambra and entitled "Moors and Moonlight," passes for her masterpiece. Henrietta's career serves mainly as a kind of comic counterpoint to Isabel's melancholy story, since she ends not only by tolerating all that she at first suspects, but by marrying a thorough Britisher and, unlike Isabel, finding happiness in her marriage.

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[8] *Notebooks*, p. 77. For the words from the preface see *Art of the Novel*, pp. 47–53, *passim.*

Isabel too, however, is for all her pride of independence entangled in conventional American ways of thinking. When she first comes to Europe, she checks everything she sees against the "descriptions in the books." She asks a great many questions without listening very carefully to the answers or at most sticking them away in her bag of information for later consideration according to her own good judgment. When told, for instance, that in England young girls do not sit with gentlemen alone late at night, though admitting that she is very fond of her own Albany ways, she says, "I always want to know the things one shouldn't do." "So as to do them?" her monitor asks. No, she says, "so as to choose"—and immediately she is alive to us in all her innocent self-assurance. With a good deal of light irony at first, James evokes the portrait of a girl who, although her thoughts are a "tangle of vague outlines" of delusions and errors which have never been "corrected by the judgment of people speaking with authority," is animated by a generous portion of self-esteem. With her "meagre knowledge, her inflated ideals, her confidence at once innocent and dogmatic," she has some of Euphemia de Mauves's romantic exaltation as well as some of Daisy Miller's presumptuous unconcern for the conventions of the society in which she moves; she more or less combines the various terms of the formula of the American girl.

But she is also an interpretation of the type in "the highest terms" of that formula, and what distinguishes her from those others is the high degree to which she possesses the primary colors of James's moral spectrum: integrity, intelligence, imagination, all of which contribute—and this is the source of the tragic tone of her story—not only to her strength but equally to her weakness. Knowing nothing of how a man escapes whipping, she hopes, for instance, that all she need demand of her fellowmen is that they treat her after her desert; and she reaches what is probably the height of her naïve presumption when she affirms as much to the man whose discreet generosity has, unknown to her, just made her rich and thereby free to follow her "determination to see, to try, to know" the world. This same hope is part of another and hardly more humble one, the "infinite hope that she should never do anything wrong." But what seems mere presumption and what is of course part of her inexperienced youth turns into the positive value of a rigorous conscience when the chance of injuring another person, even if presented as a mere contingency, causes her to hold her breath in anxiety, when the discovery of "her mere errors of feeling" can make her tremble "as if she had escaped from a trap which might have caught her and smothered her." And it is the combination of this moral sensitivity, often so close to the absurd, with "a certain nobleness of imagination which," as James says, "rendered her a good many services and played her a good many tricks" which makes her appealing in all her ludicrousness and which, above all, arouses in the observer a sense of high expectation.

Expectation is, in fact, the structural principle on which *The Portrait of a Lady* is built. In order to make the question "What will she do?" significant, James frees Isabel from all external inhibitions. He makes her an orphan so that Mrs. Touchett, her aunt, may bring her to England. Next, her cousin Ralph Touchett, intrigued by her personality, causes his father to change his will in such a manner as to make her rich. Ralph wants "to put money in her purse" so that she may be able to meet the requirements of her imagination freely. And after his father's death, we watch with him what she makes of her freedom. What she does make of it, what in the end Ralph calls "a generous mistake," is to marry Gilbert Osmond, an American expatriate living in Florence, not exactly a fortune hunter, but a subtle kind of snob, whose aesthetic refinement hides a complete emptiness of the spirit—whose whole life, in fact, is a hollow structure of calculated effects. "The idea of the whole thing," James said in one of his preliminary notes, "is that the poor girl, who has dreamed of freedom and nobleness, who has done, as she believes, a generous, natural, clear-sighted thing, finds herself in reality *ground in the very mill of the conventional*";[9] and the last phrase, here italicized, is the final judgment which in the novel James puts into Ralph's mouth, too.

Ralph is not to be identified with James. He dramatizes merely James's expectant sympathy with the American quality which Isabel represents—the imagination, as he keeps calling it, which is really a kind of spiritual energy. Henrietta Stackpole, on the other hand, dramatizes James's awareness of the vulnerability of this imagination when, as in Isabel's case, it lacks the authoritative discipline of experience. And the question posed by the conflict between these two attitudes is the question which Isabel's story answers. At the moment when the world is all before her, Ralph is alive to the possibilities which his generosity has put within her reach; Henrietta, at the same moment, skeptical and earthbound, is alive to the dangers it exposes her to, moral dangers which she sees lurking in Isabel's addiction to living, as she says, in the world of her own dreams. It is the very tendency Isabel is proud of: success, she says, is "to see some dream of one's youth come true," and the definition, imaginative as it may be, contains the very dangers Henrietta fears. For what Isabel in her young egotism lacks is the experience which teaches that men are bound to make mistakes, that no man is entire in himself, that "dreams" can be the very pride that comes before the fall. Like Daisy Miller, she is a kind of capricious fool. What distinguishes her caprices from Daisy's is that James shows us clearly what animates them.

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[9] *Notebooks*, p. 15; italics mine.

This indicates the shift of James's focus. In the earlier story the picture he gives is all of manners, all in terms of Daisy's relation with society; in *The Portrait* it is largely of the heroine's relation with herself, so that her story is a story of moral clarification. Though from the first Isabel is intent on doing right, her intention is perverted by her egotism, which prevents her from realizing the dangers to which inexperience exposes her. She believes not only in the freedom of her own will but also in the sufficiency of her own mind as a guide, and her story—forecast in Henrietta's early warning to her that in the long run one cannot "escape disagreeable duties by taking romantic views," that one must be prepared "on many occasions in life to please no one at all," not even oneself—is a denial of both. What remains with Isabel to the end is the determination to do what is right. "As seems right," Ralph Touchett says to her at the end, "you think a great deal about that," and the simplicity of Isabel's "Of course one must," spoken after she has learned to a sufficiency how prophetic Henrietta's warning was, gives the measure of her moral integrity. This is no more the easy hope of an imagination "by habit ridiculously active," but the lesson drawn conscientiously from the discipline of misery.

The general pattern of Isabel's story is the pattern underlying many of James's stories of the American girl in Europe. Their common theme is nothing more than a variation on the theme of the lived life, probably the most constant concern of his work. The full life—almost axiomatically the good life—is of course not mere activity, but consists of experience had and understood, experience appropriated to oneself and made into knowledge. Experience missed—rejected by oneself or withheld by others—and experience misunderstood, perverted, is what is bad. What is therefore necessary for the full and good life are the opportunity and the freedom which provide experience; the desire, the energy, the curiosity which takes it; and the intelligence which understands it. If these are given, then living consists of moving from unawareness to awareness, the highest good in which intellect, beauty, and morality merge in a conscience that is conscious or in a consciousness that is good. Inevitably, in James, the fine consciousness and the fine conscience are in the end identical, merge in "lucidity."

The quality which the American girl invariably has is the eager curiosity, the freedom of the mind, and her story consists either of the struggle against the limitations on her freedom imposed from without, or—if the freedom is granted—of the growth of her awareness. In the first case her antagonists, the representatives of some sort of convention, attempt to restrain her, and the result is comedy of manners whose social satire is aimed at them—that is, at people like the American matrons in "Daisy Miller," like Mrs. Westgate and Percy Beaumont of "An International Episode," or Mrs. Church of "The Pension Beaurepas." In the second case, when her story is the story of her growing awareness, the emphasis may be either on her initial ignorance or on her capacity for learning. If it is the first, her story is a story of disenchantment like the stories of Euphemia de Mauves and Bessie Alden, who find out the "truth" about aristocracy, an institution based on a false criterion of human worth, a formalization of life which violates nature by asserting superiority on grounds which do not insure superiority.

This, too, is frequently the emphasis of James's early stories, comedies whose irony is directed largely at the illusions of the heroines; illusions which, because they are founded on books, on "fictions," are a sign of their ignorance of "life" and, where Europe is concerned, are typically American. To some extent this is true of the early parts of *The Portrait of a Lady*, but the total emphasis of this novel is on Isabel's capacity for learning. Isabel, too, finds out the "truth" about a kind of pretended superiority, finds out the empty vulgarity hidden under Osmond's pretense of intellectual and cultural refinement. Above all, however, she finds out the truth about herself: that she is uninformed and therefore, in spite of her intelligence and good will, incapable of good judgment, and that the experience of her friends, particularly of Ralph Touchett, constitutes a valid authority.

This emphasis on Isabel's inner growth indicates a double transition in James's treatment of the American girl. For one thing, she now becomes his central concern; his focus shifts from Europe as the object of the American imagination to this imagination itself, and from the blankness or the illusion which is due to the lack of experience to the knowledge which is the result of experience; from the elimination of the mistaken notions about Europe, the object, to the acquisition of substance on the part of the American girl, the subject. In a word, it shifts from her lack of experience to her getting experience, and from her passively being to her actively doing, which—and this is the second aspect of the transition—is always proof of her curiosity and moral vitality. So that the transition is also from her actual weakness to her potential strength. In this *The Portrait of a Lady* stands midway between James's earlier stories and the great novels of his maturity, which focus primarily on the fulfilment of the promise contained in the energy, the appetite for life, "the lively positives and values" which in the American girl are hidden under the characteristic American "blankness."

As James's focus shifts from outward to inward, from manners to morals, the American girl becomes the symbol of American strength, and finally the "heiress of all the ages," whose virtue is tried and tested and tempered by exposure to the world, and who, like Maggie Verver of *The Golden Bowl*, inherits the earth. Maggie, Milly Theale of *The Wings of the Dove*, and finally Rosanna Gaw of *The Ivory Tower*, thoroughly fulfil the high expectations which Isabel arouses. In them, the "idealization" of a "real superiority," of which F. R. Leavis speaks in connection with Isabel,[10] is complete because what is in Isabel a kind of tragic flaw in them has been purged by the discipline of experience. Even *The Wings of the Dove*, in spite of the death of its heroine, is in a sense less deeply tragic than *The Portrait of a Lady* because the defeat of the heroine, as far as it is a defeat at all, is due to the enemy without and to a failure of the body but not of the spirit. It is a story of redemption, in that sense a "divine comedy," where Isabel's story is the story of a fall, and therefore tragic. Or, viewing *The Portrait of a Lady* as a development from the earlier stories, we see that their comic irony is transformed into tragic irony simply because James has shifted the emphasis from cloistered innocence, which lacks the strength to deal with the world, to the strength which comes from experience and exposure.

This is what distinguishes Isabel's determination from Bessie Alden's gentle firmness. Bessie does not undergo the test of real suffering; Isabel does, and the solid substance of the tragic figure reveals itself primarily in her ability to suffer without being thereby corrupted, in the fact that she transforms her suffering into a clearer knowledge of her moral needs. This is emphasized in the conclusion of the novel, when Casper Goodwood offers to help her "save" what is left of her life. What he offers her is freedom from responsibility—"Trust me as if I had the care of you," he says. It is an offer which has never tempted her, but her last refusal of him shows that what she has always wanted, even in the early days of her innocent presumption, was the freedom not from but of responsibility. All she now knows is that there is "a very straight path" for her, and her return to Rome—so strikingly similar to Hester Prynne's final return to her New England cottage—is not so much into Osmond's prison as into the freedom of her duty.

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[10] "'The Portrait of a Lady' Reprinted," *Scrutiny*, XV (Summer, 1947–48), 237.

To say this is to interpret the Isabel of the beginning of the novel in the light of the Isabel of the end, almost to credit a sister of Daisy Miller with the virtue of a Milly Theale. For in *The Portrait of a Lady* we seem indeed to catch James in the very act of idealizing the American girl. This impression and the direction of his thought which it indicates are borne out by his revisions for the New York Edition.[11] They emphasize Isabel's links with both his earlier and his later American heroines—the romantic approach to life which Henrietta Stackpole fears as her danger and the free imagination which Ralph Touchett admires as her strength. But, as Matthiessen points out, the early description of Isabel in Chapter VI was left unchanged, including the crucial sentence—"She would be an easy victim of scientific criticism if she were not intended to awaken on the reader's part an impulse more tender and more purely expectant"—which seems to arrest the very moment when James turns from comic to tragic irony. For what allows her story to be tragic is precisely this dual aspect of her character, the fact that the moral self-reliance which makes her admirable also makes her vulnerable, so that her destiny, in the best tragic manner due to the particular conjunction of character and circumstance, moves us by illustrating the waste of good.

Isabel's uninformed vitality is in sharp contrast with the studied formality of Osmond. Meeting him when her senses are charmed and her fancy stirred by her first experience of Italy, she is touched by "an indefinable beauty" in what seems to be his quiet devotion to private values. Her sense that he is "helpless and ineffectual" arouses in her a maternal tenderness and a desire to act with her "charged hands" as his good "providence." Very much like Ralph Touchett, when he puts money in *her* purse, she anticipates in her marriage to Osmond an "infinite vista of multiplied life"—a vista which before long she finds, however, turned into a "dark, narrow alley with a dead wall at the end." For everything in Osmond is pose; "his culture, his cleverness, his amenity"—all hide an appalling egotism. His contempt for the world turns out to be the shabbiest kind of snobbery. His deeply calculated effects, though produced by no vulgar means, have after all the vulgarest of motives. He is in sum the very antithesis of herself. Under his touch, she comes to feel, everything withers, under his look everything spoils; his very presence is a blight. Her way of looking at life, the very fact of her "having a mind of her own at all," is a personal offense to him, and he comes to hate her with the deep-seated antagonism of death for life. For, worse than a mere snob, he is the incarnate negation of the living spirit and, in his efforts to cut Isabel down to his own measure, guilty—like Hawthorne's Ethan Brand and Chillingworth—of the "unpardonable sin" of tampering with "the sanctity of the human heart." More and more, as Isabel's eyes open to all this, the sinister note increases and throws the shadow of a deep corruption over all that has seemed exquisite.

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[11] F. O. Matthiessen has illustrated and analyzed these revisions in *Henry James: The Major Phase*, pp. 152–86. They were not limited to Isabel. In accord with the contrast between America and Europe as more and more in those later years it clarified itself in James's mind, they were designed evidently to heighten the contrast between her uninformed vitality and the formality which in Osmond and, to a lesser extent, in Warburton indicates the atrophy of the spirit.

It is important to remember that Osmond is not a European but an American expatriate. James emphasizes this in a significant passage, put in the mouth of Madame Merle, his accomplice and herself one of the "wretched set." She speaks with the cold lucidity which comes from experience. "If we're not good Americans we're certainly poor Europeans," she tells Isabel. They have no "natural place" in Europe, no roots in the soil; at best they are collectors, devoting themselves, as Madame Merle herself does, to "some rather good old damask," or measuring their lives, as Osmond does, by the purchase of "an old silver crucifix at a bargain" —activities which are a special form of the failing peculiar to Americans in Europe, the taking of the form for the thing, illustrated already in the social snobbery of the American matrons in "Daisy Miller" or the cultural snobbery of Mrs. Church in "The Pension Beaurepas." It is also the cause of Isabel's initial failure to see the utter emptiness hidden under Osmond's superficial refinement. In Osmond it takes the form of a cultivation of tradition so perverted that he tells Isabel, if one does not have one, "one must immediately proceed to make it." And indeed she finds that he has "a very large collection" of traditions though from what source derived she cannot learn. Philip Rahv has pointed out the significance of Osmond as "a cultural type," as a portrait of the American intellectual, in whom a "residue of 'colonial' feeling" betrays itself by a tendency "to take literally" what his European counterpart is "likely to take metaphorically and imaginatively." It is all the more surprising that Rahv can speak of Osmond as "virtually a European,"[12] which indeed he is not.

For James is careful to distinguish between the American and the European antagonists of the American girl—from "Daisy Miller" to *The Golden Bowl*, where the distinction is a central part of this theme. In *The Portrait of a Lady* it is dramatized in the mutual antipathy of Osmond and Lord Warburton. Though the traditionalism of both represents a threat to the freedom of Isabel's spirit, their relations to tradition differ fundamentally. Osmond is deeply corrupt, deeply false. His traditionalism is "altogether a thing of forms, a conscious, calculated attitude," designed to cover his lack of individual substance. His seclusion on his hilltop in a villa filled with bibelots but empty of people is a symbol of his expatriation not merely from America but from all human community, from which traditions spring and which, above all, they serve. His perversion is underlined by the fact that his traditions not only take no account of such fundamental moral values as simple "decency" but actually include things so "hideously unclean" as to make Isabel feel like pushing "back her skirts." All this adds up to a sinister villainy which the picture of Lord Warburton wholly lacks. Warburton is not false simply because he is not rootless. The traditions which the other pretends to, he possesses securely, legitimately—which is the reason why Osmond desires him so immensely as a husband for his daughter. For her illegitimacy and his attempt to force her into the marriage with the nobleman are more than a convenience of plot; they are both symbolic of Osmond's relation to human society.

Yet, Osmond's corruption is of course not the result of his being an American. What it illustrates is the danger which Europe exposes Americans to. It is a danger inherent in the very process of ordering experience significantly—the danger that the order, the form, which results from the action of the spirit on experience, becomes frozen and self-sufficient and finally imprisons the very spirit which gave it birth. It is the danger typical of Europe, where the past lingers not only in the form of ruins and associations but in the form also of institutions which tend to perpetuate themselves even when their reason for being if not their meaning is antiquated. Emerson's rejection of the authority of books or of the single Revelation are examples of the American criticism of such frozen forms in the fields of philosophy and religion. The contrast between natural and artificial aristocracy is an example of it in the field of social and political thought which James, as we have seen, used in some of his earliest tales and of which a trace lingers in Isabel's relation to Lord Warburton.

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[12] *Image and Idea* (Norfolk, 1949), pp. 53 and 57n. The difference between the European owner and the American collector becomes important in the contrast between Maria Gostrey and Madame de Vionnet of *The Ambassadors;* see ch. iv., 103 above [in *The Image of Europe*—Eds.].

Her reasons for refusing the Englishman's proposal indeed go to the very center of James's vision of international contrast. It is not that she objects to the "aristocratic life"; it is rather that her notions of it differ from Warburton's. She thinks of it as "simply the union of great knowledge with great liberty," and it is for her liberty that she fears. Not that Warburton would imprison her as Osmond tries to do. There is no doubt of his consideration, his kindness; there is nothing in the least sinister about him. Yet she regards his proposal somehow as the design of "a territorial, a political, a social magnate" to draw her into a "system," the system of which his sisters are such charming but such ominously pale products.

Lord Warburton's misfortune is that his eminence lies in a "collection of attributes and powers" independent of his individual character, no matter how appealing *that* may be. In social and political terms he is a nobleman of birth; in James's psychological terms he is the expensive product of cultivation and therefore demands consideration which Isabel does not have the patience to give. She is used to judging people on the basis of "character and wit," on the basis of the question whether they please "her sublime soul"—according to rules too simple to serve as a measure of Warburton's qualifications. In a word, marriage to him fails "to support any enlightened prejudice in favour of the free exploration of life"; there is "something stiff and stupid" in the system which has made him—all of which is borne in upon her with emphatic energy by a letter from Caspar Goodwood burning in her pocket at the very time Warburton makes his plea. Goodwood, though he too threatens her liberty, represents a power which is in no degree a matter of his "advantages" but entirely a matter of the spirit which sits "in his clear-burning eyes like some tireless watcher at a window." And the memory of *that* power is fatal to Warburton's hopes.

The American manufacturer, engineer, mover of men, and the English Lord represent qualities which James considered more and more as typical of America and Europe. But it is important to see that they represent these qualities in a neutral equilibrium of positive and negative, that each satisfies where the other does not, that if in Warburton the man is smothered by the "system," Goodwood shows his appetites "too simply and artlessly"; that if Warburton's virtues are too much cultivated, Goodwood's are not cultivated enough. For American vitality and European discipline both had alike their potentials for good and evil. Nor does James's international fiction rest, as some critics have asserted, on a distinction between moral and aesthetic values, between "cultural" inferiority but "moral" superiority in America and their opposites in Europe.[13] In fact, wherever such explanations are attempted, the simplification leads to more or less flagrant distortions and misreadings of the moral significance of individual characters. Art and life are in James's view of things much too closely related, "the house of life and the palace of art," as he recalls in *A Small Boy and Others*, became at an early time too "mixed and interchangeable"[14] to allow so simple an opposition between moral and aesthetic values.

How close their relation was for him a story like "The Figure in the Carpet" makes clear: "Literature was a game of skill, and skill meant courage, and courage meant honour, and honour meant passion, meant life." Even more forthright, certainly more personal, is a letter to H. G. Wells: "It is art that *makes* life," James wrote, "and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process." Wells answered that he could "read sense into" this statement only by assuming that James was using *art* "for every conscious human activity." "I use the word," Wells added, "for a research and attainment that is technical and special"—and nothing could have formed a clearer contrast with the intimate relation James saw between art and life, and with the organic relation of form and content which derives from it. Consciousness is, ultimately, the soul of James's art, in which "force and beauty," the moral and the aesthetic, become one. For him, "the 'moral' sense of a work of art," as he said in the preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, depended directly on "the amount of felt life concerned in producing it." And in the preface to "The Lesson of the Master," which is perhaps his most extended single discourse on the subject, he defined the work of the artist, the "intelligent painter of life," as the midwife assistance he gives at the birth of "true meanings."[15] Stephen Dedalus went forth to encounter "the reality of experience" and in the smithy of his soul to forge "the uncreated conscience" of his race. It is what James, too—hesitantly and without the megalomania—again and again set out to do.

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[13] See for instance Randall Stewart, "The Moral Aspects of Henry James's 'International Situation,'" *University Review*, X (1943), 109.

[14] P. 351.

[15] For the exchange with Wells, which was provoked by a parody of James in Wells's *Boon*, see *Letters*, II, 485–90. For the two passages from the prefaces see *Art of the Novel*, pp. 45, 224. As to "The Figure in the Carpet," James's preface—in particular that part containing his remarks about "operative irony"

His view of the process of art, moreover, was closely paralleled by his view of the process of history, both being integral to his view of life. If the virtue of art was to create "true meanings," historical experience, too, made for order, for form—for the manners, conventions, traditions governing society. These results of the continuity of European experience, of European history "as a still-felt past,"[16] therefore, are in James's view by no means necessarily inimical to life. They need not smother the spirit; they may liberate it. This, in *The Portrait of a Lady*, is the meaning of the contrast between Osmond, who attempts to stifle Isabel's freedom, and Ralph Touchett, also a "Europeanized American," who provides her with freedom in order to see the promise of her spirit fulfilled. And the dual nature of convention is made explicit in the crucial chapter (XLII) in which Isabel analyzes the mistake she has made in marrying Osmond: "He had told her he loved the conventional," and it had seemed to her "a noble declaration" of his love of "harmony and order and decency and of all the stately offices of life." But with "incredulous terror," as time passes, Isabel discovers that the house of Osmond's thought is a house of darkness and suffocation to which his "beautiful mind" gives neither light nor air, a prison of the spirit or its tomb, instead of, as she thought, a noble mansion which it has built and in which it lives. For Osmond has divorced convention and tradition from life.

He and, to a minor extent, Lord Warburton, then, represent the danger inherent in the European emphasis on order. But a similar danger inheres also in the America which James contrasted with this Europe. The ultimate good in James's view of things, as we have seen, is the awareness which results from the full life, the kind of awareness which is central in the art which "*makes* life, makes interest, makes importance." And while James's images of America are rarely without the vital energy which constitutes the needed impulse for living fully, yet this energy—like the European sense of form—has potentialities for

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(*Art of the Novel*, pp. 221–23)—leaves little doubt that the sentence I have quoted, although it describes the convictions of the critics and writers in the story, came from the heart—Percy D. Westbrook's reading of the story as a satire ("The Supersubtle Fry," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, VIII [1953], 134–40) notwithstanding.

[16] James's phrase in *A Small Boy and Others*, p. 351.

harm as well as for profit. Its promise may be broken. It, too, may turn tyrannical; it, too, may corrupt if, refusing to submit to the creative discipline of the spirit, it explodes in sheer mindless activity. This, as we shall see, is implicit in a number of stories reflecting James's reaction to his renewed acquaintance with America in 1904, a reaction which led him to a surprising re-evaluation even of the type of the American girl. But long before this, he had occasionally touched upon the negative aspects of the free American energy.

It is a striking fact that while the promise of unencumbered American vitality is in James almost invariably symbolized by the young American girl, the questions which it raises and the threats which it contains are usually dramatized in American men. An exception to this rule is Christopher Newman of *The American.*[17] But he is a conscious creation of one of nature's noblemen, and the traditional contrast between natural and artificial aristocracy in James soon transcended the limits of social and political criticism and merged with his distinction between "character" as a gift of nature and "culture" as an accumulation of social experience—a distinction which seems to have derived from observation and which entered into some of his earliest tales. Thus "Travelling Companions" (1870) contains an "excellent representative American" who points forward directly to Newman: "Without taste, without culture or polish, he nevertheless produced an impression of substance in character, keenness in perception, and intensity in will, which effectually redeemed him from vulgarity." And the narrator, a young American brought up largely in Europe, echoes traditional American language when he adds that the combination of these qualities with tolerance, self-confidence, fearlessness "might have been very fairly termed aristocratic." Yet in part, the terms are literally those of one of James's letters from England of the year before "Travelling Companions" was published: "We seem a people of *character*," he had written to his mother, "we seem to have energy, capacity and intellectual stuff in ample measure," but all "with *culture* quite left out. It's the absolute and incredible lack of *culture* that strikes you in common travelling Americans."[18]

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[17] Another exception is "Louisa Pallant" (1888), a short story in which "a well-grown, well-washed muscular young American," highly salubrious and suspected of "great innocence"—apparently in James's gallery of Americans the only example of this type—is exposed to the wiles of an American girl whose unmitigated social ambition is the product of a calculated worldly training received at the hands of a worldly mother (the Louisa of the title) during a youth spent largely in European hotels. But since the contrast between the innocence of the young athlete and the corruption of the girl is neither at the center of the story nor related to any international contrast, the story falls really outside the canon of James's international tales.

The contrast between "character" and "culture," related also to the distinction between "imagination" and "observation" which "Travelling Companions" and *Roderick Hudson* make in connection with the criticism of art, is part of the whole question of the values of innocence and experience in human life. But after *The American* James relegated his male Americans more and more to negative roles. Christopher Newman dwindles into the tired businessman, lost in Europe and leaving exploration to his women—into a Mr. Ruck or a Mr. Dosson, men who still have a certain loose liberality about them, still some of the "good-humored tolerance" of the representative American, but not his energy or his keenness. Or Newman loses his poise and large dignity and turns into a figure of rash aggressive energy which threatens, as Goodwood does, the freedom necessary for the creative exploration of life. Or, worst of all, Goodwood loses the intelligence and the spirit which burn so clearly in his eyes and wastes his energy in ill-conceived activity. The imaginative and intelligent eagerness for life, at any rate, James more and more exclusively incorporates in the young American girl, who thereby comes to take the place of Nature's nobleman in the contrast between American idealism and European formality.[19]

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[18] *Letters*, I, 22. What follows completes the contrast: "The pleasantness of the English, on the other side, comes in a great measure from the fact of their each having been dipped into the crucible, which gives them a sort of coating of comely varnish and colour. They have been smoothed and polished by mutual social attrition." Compare this with the description of the Englishman in "The Modern Warning"; see p. 80 above [in *The Image of Europe*—Eds.].

[19] Ralph Touchett of *The Portrait of a Lady* and Lambert Strether of *The Ambassadors* are two shining exceptions to this rule, but both of them are elegiac figures who, for one reason or another, are able to partake in life as observers only. That they are vibrantly aware of the active fulfillment they have missed is what distinguishes them from their male compatriots.

Point of View

JOSEPH WARREN BEACH

THE STORIES OF Henry James are records of seeing rather than of doing. That we have seen to be, at any rate, the general impression of the reader. The process of the story is always more or less what Mr. James himself calls in one case a "process of vision." Of "The Ambassadors" he says, referring to the enlightenment of the main character, "The business of my tale and the march of my action, not to say the precious moral of everything, is just my demonstration of this process of vision." [1] Of "The Spoils of Poynton" he says, referring to the central character, Fleda Vetch, "The progress and march of my tale became and remained that of her understanding." [2] In a story so conceived, a matter of prime importance must naturally be the point of view from which the vision is had, the source of information or the medium through which what is to be seen is conveyed to the reader. There is no matter in which James has shown greater care for technique.

Mr. James is seldom or never, in his later work, the "omniscient author." He has a great scorn for this slovenly way of telling a story. It is only in his earlier work that he sometimes allows himself to step in and give special information to the reader,—information which he could not have had from the person or persons who are for the moment most concerned. Quite as little does he employ the device of having the story told in the first person by the leading character, with its great initial sacrifice of plausibility. His austere muse will not consent to that "terrible fluidity of self-revelation" that characterizes narratives like "Gil Blas" and "David Copperfield." [3]

This matter of the point of view is a most complex and difficult one, and the practice of story-tellers is manifold. It would be impossible to

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[1] Vol. XXI [of the "New York" edition of James's works, Scribner's, 1907–1909—Eds.], p. vi.

[2] Vol. X, p. xiii.

[3] See Vol. XXI, pp. xvii–xix.

SOURCE: *Reprinted from* The Method of Henry James, *pp. 56–71, by Joseph Warren Beach (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918), by permission of the Yale University Press.*

give a brief summary of the common usage, even if one had made a sufficiently careful survey of the field to feel certain of all the facts. But I can give some illustration of methods carefully avoided by James. And it will be interesting to take examples from the work of an earlier master to whom James owes a considerable debt.[4]

Hawthorne, in "The Marble Faun," is quite innocent of the scruples that so constantly exercise the conscience of the later American novelist. Not only does he indulge in the most extended descriptions and disquisitions, in which no pretense is made of following the discoveries and impressions of the characters; but he often rends abruptly the tissue of their impressions to throw in some observation of his own. In scene after scene, again, the author starts out telling his story from the point of view of one of the characters, recording simply what may be taken in by him, only to shift suddenly for a moment or for good to the point of view of another. In the scene of "The Marble Saloon," it is Kenyon who is first shown us observing the behavior and listening to the words of Miriam. It was he who watched for her arrival, he to whom "the feebleness of her step was apparent," who "was startled to perceive" such an impulse of hers, who "could not but marvel" at such another. But we are not so sure of the point of view when we read, "She blushed, and turned away her eyes, knowing that there was more surprise and joy in their dewy glances, than any man save one ought to detect there." And in the following paragraph, there is an indubitable and disconcerting shift of the point of view. "Kenyon could not but marvel at the subjection into which this proud and self-dependent woman had wilfully flung herself, hanging her life upon the chance of an angry or favorable regard from a person who, a little while before, had seemed the plaything of a moment. But, in Miriam's eyes, Donatello was always, thenceforth, invested with the tragic dignity of their hour of crime; and, furthermore, the keen and deep insight with which her love endowed her [here we encounter the "omniscient author" in person] enabled her to know him far better than he could be known by ordinary observation." It is as if, in a dance, the spotlight, which has been resting long on the man, should be shifted for one intense moment to the figure of his companion. In the scene of "The Bronze Pontiff's Benediction," the spotlight is constantly shifting from one to another of the three performers, then to the "mob" of onlookers, to rest finally, for the curtain, on all three performers in a group.

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[4] Equally striking illustrations may be found in work so recent as that of Mr. Hardy.

In some cases the master of the puppets intrudes himself with the most amazing disregard for illusion, the highest impudence, as it would be judged by more modern showmen. In the chapter entitled "Reminiscences of Miriam," we have been following the track of Hilda's thoughts. It has been difficult to distinguish just what are Hilda's own reflections and what the interpretations and explanations of the author. But there is no doubt as to the line of distinction at this point: "Recurring to the delinquencies of which she fancied (we say 'fancied' because we do not unhesitatingly adopt Hilda's present view, but rather suppose her misled by her feelings)—of which she fancied herself guilty towards her friend, she suddenly remembered a sealed packet that Miriam had confided to her." Here the author marks the distinction between his own and his character's view of the moral facts. In a later chapter, "A Frolic of the Carnival," we see him in the act of dangling before us his knowledge of certain material facts upon which he is not yet ready to enlighten us. It is at the moment of Hilda's appearance in the Englishman's balcony during the carnival, after her period of mysterious invisibility, "Whence she had come," says the author, "or where she had been hidden, during this mysterious interval, we can but imperfectly surmise, and do not mean, at present, to make it a matter of formal explanation with the reader. It is better, perhaps, to fancy that she had been snatched away to a land of picture; that she had been straying with Claude in the golden light which he used to shed over his landscapes, but which he could never have beheld with his waking eyes," etc., etc. Thus does the author flout his patient reader, frankly acknowledging his substantial obligation and offering to pay it in the airy coin of poesy.

Such methods were suitable, it may be, to the easy-going "romance of Monte Beni," a tissue of poetic fancies, in which the characters are but vague symbols of moral truth, and in which, as he tells us himself, the last thing the author wishes to create is an illusion of "reality." They would not do at all for the close-woven psychological tissue of Henry James. Considering the sort of effect at which he aimed, he could not afford to risk the leakage of illusion (to use a favorite figure of his own); he could not afford to risk that blurring of effect caused by the arbitrary change of focus. He must take greater pains to conceal his art, and must never allow himself to be caught in the act of composing his stage effects. The realist, and above all the psychologist, in fiction has less margin of profit, as we may say in the language of the market, and is obliged to figure closer in regard to "overhead costs." He comes—at least Mr. James had come—to take great pride in his ingenuities of economy. In the choice and maintenance of a point of view, he is seeking a steady consistency of effect, the intensity and concentration that come of an exact centering of attention upon the chosen plot of consciousness. In the preface to "The Wings of the Dove," he says, "There is no economy of treatment without an adopted, a related point of view, and though I understand, under certain degrees of pressure, a represented community of vision between several parties to the action when it makes for concentration, I understand no breaking up of the register, no sacrifice of the recording consistency, that doesn't rather scatter and weaken." [5]

In some cases James chose to present his scene in a highly objective manner, as it would be followed by an imaginary spectator. In "The Outcry" and "The Awkward Age" he will hardly record the slightest subjective reaction of one of his characters without some reference to this postulated observer. "Hugh might at this moment have shown to an initiated eye as fairly elated." [6] "Unmistakably—for us at least—our young man was gaining time." [7] The great thing is not to go outside the present scene for enlightenment. In "The Awkward Age," he tells us, he wished always "to make the presented occasion tell all its story itself, remain shut up in its own presence and yet on that patch of staked-out ground become thoroughly interesting and remain thoroughly clear." [8] He follows the same plan in "The Outcry." We read of a certain lady that she had a certain gentleman's "announced name ringing in her ears—to some effect that we are as yet not qualified to discern." [9] Such is the tone the author assumes to put in his place any reader undertaking to see more than is allowed by the conditions of the exhibition.

But this is not his happiest way of securing consistency in the point of view. His happiest way is one which admits our following more closely the thoughts and feelings of his characters. "Again and again, on review," he writes in the preface to the last novel of the series, "the shorter things in especial that I have gathered into this Series have ranged themselves not as my own impersonal account of the affair in hand, but as my account of somebody's impression of it—the terms of this person's access to it and estimate of it contributing thus by some fine little law to intensification of interest." [10] The great charm of such a narrative as "The Spoils of Poynton" resides in that intimacy with the mind of Fleda, that sense of identification with her feeling and thought, in all their intensity, in all their delicate shift and play, that comes of this consistency in the point of view. James speaks often in his prefaces of his desire to get himself and his reader "down into the arena"—to "live, breathe, converse with the persons engaged in the struggle that provides for the others in the circling tiers the entertainment of the game." [11]

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[5] Vol. XIX, p. xvi.

[6] "The Outcry," p. 143; compare also pp. 177, 211, 227.

[7] Id., p. 85.

[8] Vol. IX, pp. xvii–xviii.

[9] P. 39.

[10] Vol. XXIII, p. v.

The most remarkable feat of Henry James in this order is the record of "What Maisie Knew," in which he chose deliberately for his "register of impressions" the "small expanding consciousness" of a little girl. The story deals with vulgar facts involving passions and relations far beyond the understanding of any little girl, however clever, let alone so innocent and "nice" an understanding as this one. And yet the whole history is given without appeal to any other source of information than the natural observation of the little girl. This was the challenge of the subject to the artistic temper of Henry James. Given such an observer, he tells us in the preface, the design "would be to make and keep her so limited consciousness the very field of my picture while at the same time guarding with care the integrity of the objects represented." As she wouldn't *understand* much that occurred, the author was obliged to "stretch the matter to what his wondering witness materially and inevitably *saw*." He determined on "giving it *all*, the whole situation surrounding her, but . . . giving it only through the occasions and connexions of her proximity and her attention. . . . This would be, to begin with, a plan of absolutely definite and measurable application—that in itself always a mark of beauty." [12]

Not merely the plan of "measurable application," but the economy of means involved in this particular plan was prized by Mr. James as "in itself always a mark of beauty." Over and over again he lets us know how much he loves to pack his material into the smallest possible compass, to make one stroke do duty for several, to secure that intensification of effect which comes of the double functioning of any given element in the pictorial composition. Such economies are to be secured by various means, but none are more gratifying than those which flow from an ingenious choice of a point of view. Mr. James notes with no little complacency the way in which, in "The Golden Bowl," the Princess, in addition to playing her part in the drama as required, serves as interpreter to us. Thus "the Princess . . . in addition to feeling everything she has to, and to playing her part just in that proportion, duplicates . . . her value and becomes a compositional resource . . . as well as a value intrinsic."[13] As usual Mr. James reserves his extremest expressions of satisfaction for the technique of "The Ambassadors," of which the "major propriety," the great "compositional law" was "that of employing but one centre and keeping it all within my hero's consciousness." There were to be plenty of other people with their motives and interests. "But Strether's sense of these things, and Strether's only, should avail me for showing them; I should know them but through his more or less groping knowledge of them, since his very gropings would figure among his most interesting motions, and a full observance of the rich rigour I speak of would give me more of the effect I should be most 'after' than all other possible observances together. It would give me a large unity, and that in turn would crown me with the grace to which the enlightened story-teller will at any time, for his interest, sacrifice if need be all other graces whatever. I refer of course to the grace of intensity."[14]

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[11] Vol. XXIII, p. vi. [12] Vol. XI, pp. ix–x.

Now the most notable peculiarity of the stories of Henry James—regarding conception rather than execution—is the refined, not to say fine-drawn interpretation of character, of motive and of personal relations. And if the situations and the reactions of character are to be conveyed to the reader exclusively through the consciousness of persons in the story, the persons thus serving as interpreters must necessarily be persons of fine discrimination, of keen penetration, of delicate sensibility. And this is, I think, almost invariably the case.[15]

As early as the time of "Roderick Hudson" James had created such an interpreter in the person of Rowland Mallet. As he says himself, "The centre of interest throughout 'Roderick' is in Rowland Mallet's consciousness, and the drama is the very drama of that consciousness—which I had of course to make sufficiently acute in order to enable it, like a set and lighted scene, to hold the play. . . . It had, naturally . . . not to be *too* acute—which would have disconnected it and made it superhuman: the beautiful little problem was to keep it connected, connected intimately, with the general human exposure . . . and yet to endow it with such intelligence that the appearances reflected in it, and constituting together there the situation and the 'story,' should become by that fact intelligible."[16]

But our best instances of this intelligent interpreter from within are to be found in the leading characters of the later stories. Every reader of James has been impressed—some have been bored—by the constancy with which the characters bestow upon one another the epithets "wonderful," "beautiful," "complete," "splendid," and others to the same effect. Probably the person most lavishly praised for "wonderful" is Lambert Strether, and it is no less competent a judge than Maria Gostrey who thus passes judgment upon his insight and discrimination. It was for similar gifts that Mrs. Gereth made choice of Fleda Vetch for her friend and the depositary of the precious Spoils. Fleda appears from the beginning to be as well endowed as Mrs. Gereth with esthetic and practical intelligence; and we are made to feel before the end how much she surpasses her patron in moral and spiritual fineness. There is no character in fiction upon whose spiritual intelligence was put a harder and more unrelenting strain; and it is largely the success with which she supported this strain that gives her little story so high a place among all the novels of James. Her creator is fully conscious of all that is involved in this fact on the technical side, of the technical problem confronting the artist who undertakes such a subject, and the rewards higher than technical crowning his success. "Once more," in reviewing this work he perceives "that a subject so lighted, a subject residing in somebody's excited and concentrated feeling about something . . . has more beauty to give out than under any other style of pressure. [Such is his own somewhat confused combination of figures.] One is confronted obviously thus with the question of the importances; with that in particular, no doubt, of the weight of intelligent consciousness, consciousness of the whole, or of something ominously like it, that one may decently permit a represented figure to appear to throw. . . . This intelligence, an honorable amount of it, on the part of the person to whom one most invites attention, has but to play with sufficient freedom and ease, or call it with the right grace, to guarantee us that quantum of the impression of beauty which is the most fixed of the possible advantages of our producible effect. It may fail, as a positive presence, on other sides and in other connexions; but more or less of the treasure is stored safe from the moment such a quality of inward life is distilled, or in other words from the moment so fine an interpretation and criticism as that of Fleda Vetch's [*sic*]—to cite the present case—is applied without waste to the surrounding tangle."[17]

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[13] Vol. XXIII, p. vii.

[14] Vol. XXI, p. xv.

[15] Even Maisie is all of this, wanting only in maturity and experience to make her a satisfactory recorder of the objective as well as the subjective facts, that is of the incidents themselves as well as her youthful impressions of them.

[16] Vol. I, p. xvii.

In some of his stories in which he has provided several such intelligences, or at any rate several minds sufficiently suited to act as "registers," James has experimented with the device of alternating points of view. This method was adopted in the more objective narrative of "The Tragic Muse," in which not too much is expected of Nick Dormer and Peter Sherringham in the matter of interpretation. More distinctive is the work in "The Wings of the Dove," in which if the story must get itself told from at least three different points of view—those of Kate, of Milly and of Merton—it is in point of fact the mental topography of these characters that we are most interested in exploring. In any case the situation seemed to the author one best exhibited now from one side and now from another; and this made a technical problem strongly appealing to the artist in him. "There was the 'fun' . . . of establishing one's successive centres—of fixing them so exactly that the portions of the subject commanded by them as by happy points of view, and accordingly treated from them, would constitute, so to speak, sufficiently solid *blocks* of wrought material, squared to the sharp edge, as to have weight and mass and carrying power; to make for construction, that is, to conduce to effect and to provide for beauty. Such a block, obviously, is the whole preliminary presentation of Kate Croy which, from the first, I recall, absolutely declined to enact itself save in terms of amplitude." [18] Mr. James speaks, changing the figure again, of his instinct in this case for the "indirect presentation of his main image" (that is, of Milly); this "proceeds obviously from her painter's tenderness of imagination about her, which reduces him to watching her, as it were, through the successive windows of other people's interest in her." [19]

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[17] Vol. X, pp. xiii–xiv.

It is clear that we have nothing here in common with that arbitrary and unconsidered shift of point of view within the chapter, within the paragraph, that visible manipulation of the puppets from without, which is so great a menace to illusion and intimacy. It is equally clear, however, how much the author pays, in this method, for the privilege of seeing the situation from more sides than one. He pays with the loss of that growing intensity, the larger consistency, which derive from uninterrupted continuity of the same conscious observation such as we have in "Poynton," in "Maisie," in "The Ambassadors," and—to name one instance from the earlier period—in "Roderick Hudson." At any rate, one gets from "The Dove" much less of a sense of unity and distinctness, in the whole, and in many of the parts, than from "Poynton" or

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[18] Vol. XIX, pp. xii–xiii. [19] Id., p. xxii.

"The Ambassadors," or, for that matter, from "The Golden Bowl." "The Golden Bowl" lies, in method, between "The Ambassadors" and "The Dove"; since here there is a change in point of view, but just the one change, between the first and second parts of the story. "The whole thing," Mr. James points out in the preface, "remains subject to the register, ever so closely kept, of the consciousness of but two of the characters. The Prince, in the first half of the book, virtually sees and knows and makes out, virtually represents to himself everything that concerns us. . . . The function of the Princess, in the remainder, matches exactly with his; the register of *her* consciousness is as closely kept."[20] It may well be partly this large division, in which one entire half of the story is given to the development of the situation in each of these minds, and in which the narrative does not keep making a fresh start, as in "The Dove," that accounts for the greater force and distinctness of effect in "The Golden Bowl."

Readers well acquainted with James's shorter stories will meantime have been wondering at my failure to mention another device employed in so many of his tales. I mean the introduction of some observer not concerned personally, or but slightly concerned, in the incidents recorded. This person is not, like Strether, an important actor; he is simply the narrator and interpreter of all that we are offered. He is often, says Mr. James, "but an unnamed, unintroduced and (save by right of intrinsic wit) unwarranted participant, the impersonal author's concrete deputy or delegate," etc.[21] Yet by means of him, the effect is at least made objectively pictorial without any recourse to the "mere muffled majesty of irresponsible 'authorship.'" Through him the facts are given with greater authority than can attach to the "omniscience" of any writer of fiction.

One at once recalls instances of this comparatively unconcerned observer in tales from every period except the very latest. Such are the persons who tell the stories of "A Passionate Pilgrim," "The Madonna of the Future," "The Pension Beaurepas" (all products of the 70's); those of "The Patagonia," "The Author of Beltraffio," "The Aspern Papers" (all from the 80's); those of "The Death of the Lion" and "Europe" (from the 90's). In all of these tales the account is given in the first person, since the objections to the autobiographic method do not hold when there is no question of the revelation of one's own character and affairs. Sometimes, however, as in "Pandora," "The Liar,"

[20] Vol. XXIII, pp. vi–vii. [21] Id., p. v.

and "The Two Faces," the third person is used even of this objective observer of the scene.

Of course this observer is not represented as an intrusive person with no more legitimate interest in the story than our universal human curiosity. That would be to make him too disagreeable for the purpose; or it would be too obviously a device for plausibility. His relation to the other characters must always be a natural one. The situation has come to his notice, in the first instance, in a perfectly natural manner; and if he goes on to pursue his inquiry, this is the result of a friendly or professional interest proper enough. In a considerable number of cases he is a man of letters for whom the interest in a literary phenomenon comes to reinforce his friendly sympathy for the persons concerned. Often, as in "The Figure in the Carpet," he has some little axe of his own to grind; sometimes, as in "The Beldonald Holbein," a little grudge of his own to gratify. And so, by insensible degrees, this character passes over into that of the interested observer, the actor himself. But we are at present considering the observer whose concern in the action remains slight and secondary.

It will be observed that this device of the non-interested observer is used by James only in his shorter stories, or tales, and not in his novels. The reason is not far to seek. The real inwardness of any situation, the intimate personal feeling, cannot be rendered thus from the outside. But then it is scarcely possible for the intimate personal feeling to be rendered, for the real inwardness of a situation to be developed, by whatever means, in any but the longest of *tales*. It takes *time* to get up momentum in the subjective world, to achieve the effect of weight and depth of feeling. And it is clear that the tales of Henry James are very seldom as subjective in method or intention as his novels. They are not so full and deep in conception as the novels. They are but episodes, fragments, glimpses of life caught on the wing. And they can often best be realized through the narrative of a comparative outsider. In the later stories, novel and tale alike, the subjective tendency is much greater. And it is remarkable how little use is made in the twentieth century tales of the device which was earlier such a favorite. "The Beast in the Jungle," "Crapy Cornelia," "The Bench of Desolation"—these stories follow from within the feeling and fortunes of the characters most concerned.[22]

Whether the situation is presented from without or from within,

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[22] The two last-named published in "The Finer Grain" (1910), and first appearing in magazines in 1909, too late to be included in the New York edition.

James has frequent recourse to another device for throwing additional light upon it. This is the introduction of a confidante—for this person is almost invariably a woman—with whom the (generally male) observer or actor may discuss the situation, comparing notes and checking up theories. This device is common in the novels and not infrequent in the tales. There are hints of this character in the early period, such as Mrs. Draper in "Madame de Mauves," Mrs. Tristram in "The American," Blanche Adney in "The Private Life." But she becomes much more important, and maintains her importance more steadily throughout the course of the story, in the later period: witness Mrs. Munden in "The Beldonald Holbein," Mrs. Wix in "Maisie," Maria Gostrey in "The Ambassadors," Mrs. Assingham in "The Golden Bowl." It is Mrs. Munden who first gives his cue to the portrait-painter who tells the story as to the leading motive of Lady Beldonald, and who follows with him each stage in the situation resulting from the importation of her ugly-beautiful American cousin. It is with Mrs. Wix that little Maisie works out the moral problem involved in the relation of her step-father and her stepmother. It is Maria Gostrey who gives Strether his gradual initiation into the spirit of "Europe" and who receives his regular reports on the progress of his curious embassy. It is to Mrs. Assingham that the Prince Amerigo brings the perplexities occasioned by his marriage into so different a world from that in which he has been bred. These persons do not tend to confuse the point of view. They serve rather to strengthen the light thrown upon the situation from the mind of the chief observer. They are his confederates, acting and above all making observations in his interest. They give information and suggestion without which he could hardly arrive at a proper understanding of the case. They set him right when he goes astray. Above all, as sympathetic and intelligent listeners, they encourage him to express in words his view of the case he is observing and of his own position in relation to it. They are thus serving him and the author at the same time. They serve to transfer the record from the mind to the tongue of the observer, to dramatize the point of view, as it were, realizing it, or objectifying it in speech, and so rendering it fit for the purposes of fiction.

James's "The Real Thing": Three Levels of Meaning

EARLE G. LABOR

Despite its popularity in the classroom (it is perhaps the most anthologized of all Henry James's stories), "The Real Thing" continues to be read as a little masterpiece which, according to Clifton Fadiman, "expresses amusingly (and no more than that), the old truth that art is a *transformation* of reality, not a mere reflection of the thing itself." [1] Without commenting upon Mr. Fadiman's curious sense of humor, I should like to demonstrate that James's theme—an "exquisite" question, as he put it—includes considerably "more than that."

It should be evident that, were the central meaning of "The Real Thing" no more than an esthetic cliché, the question that struck James's sensibility could hardly have been an exquisite one. An intelligence so fine seldom concerned itself with platitudes. It is of course James's remarkable fusion of the simple and the complex, the explicit and the subtle, that makes "The Real Thing" so admirably suited to the literary and critical initiation of the college student. Not only does James provide

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[1] "A Note on The Real Thing," *The Short Stories of Henry James* (New York, 1945), p. 217. Several critics have gone beyond Fadiman's superficial reading of this story; especially noteworthy are the following: William F. Marquardt, "A Practical Approach to *The Real Thing* by Henry James," *English "A" Analyst* (Northwestern University), No. 14 (June 13, 1949); Quentin Anderson, ed., *Henry James: Selected Short Stories* (New York, 1957), pp. vii–ix; and Walter F. Wright, "The Real Thing," *Research Studies of the State College of Washington*, XXV (March, 1957), 85–90. Also, see Edward Stone, ed., *Henry James: Seven Stories and Studies* (New York, 1961), pp. 131–141, 309; and Maurice Beebe and William T. Stafford, "Criticism of Henry James: A Selected Checklist with an Index to Studies of Separate Works," *Modern Fiction Studies*, III (Spring, 1957), 91.

Source: *Reprinted from* College English, *XXIII (Feb. 1962), 376–378, with the permission of the National Council of Teachers of English and Earle G. Labor.*

a commentary upon the nature of art (his theme obviously applies to writing as well as to painting); his story is also an excellent illustration of the thing itself. Like his painter-narrator, the author has, through "the alchemy of art," transformed a rather trivial episode involving two dull social has-beens, the Monarchs, and a couple of grubby nobodies, Miss Churm and Oronte, into a work of art that is rich with universality and "felt life." From this standpoint, the story is itself "the real thing," though I doubt that James intended to be so "clever" about his title.

From a more serious point of view, there are three major thematic levels in "The Real Thing": (1) the social, (2) the esthetic, and (3) the moral. About (1) James is quite explicit: socially speaking, Major and Mrs. Monarch have been and still are the real thing; they are, as the porter's wife immediately informs us, "a gentleman and a lady." They are neither "celebrities" nor "personalities," and they have lost their money; but they have retained the essential quality that makes them what they are: their manners. Furthermore, "They weren't superficial." And their marriage (*the* social institution) "had no weak spot. It was a real marriage . . . a nut for pessimists to crack."

Unhappily, as the narrator complains, the real thing for society is "the wrong thing" for art. In the "deceptive atmosphere of art even the highest respectability may fail of being plastic." In other words, the real thing for the artist must be "the ideal thing." On a second and higher level of meaning, then, the real thing—esthetically—is the creative imagination of the artist himself. (1) cannot accommodate itself to (2), nor vice versa. It is from the conflict between these two levels of meaning that the tension within the story partially derives. The Monarchs prove to be utterly intractable for the artist's purposes. The painter's foolish attempt to amalgamate these incompatible elements almost ruins his project and, worse, perhaps irreparably mars his creative talent, if we are to accept the word of his esthetic conscience, Jack Hawley.

But are we to accept Hawley's judgment? I think we must—at least from the purely esthetic viewpoint. Our narrator makes it fairly clear that his friend's critical insights are trustworthy: ". . . he was always of such good counsel. He painted badly himself, but there was no one like him for putting his finger on the place." Hawley perceives almost immediately that if the painter is to preserve his artistic integrity the Monarchs must be got rid of: " 'Ce sont des gens qu'il faut mettre à la porte.' " Notwithstanding his critical incisiveness, however, Jack Hawley is heartless. And this is the key to the third level of meaning in the story, a meaning that James skillfully withholds until his concluding sentence—a meaning so deftly manipulated that it has apparently been overlooked by most of James's critics.

Following his friend's sound advice, the painter dismisses the pathetically inept Monarchs, who, according to Hawley, "did me a permanent harm, got me into false ways." Then he concludes with this enigmatic qualification: "If it be true I'm content to have paid the price—for the memory." An astounding concession for any artist to make! In essence, the narrator admits that he has been willing to sacrifice something of the artist's most precious gift, his creative talent, for something else termed vaguely as "the memory."

In order to determine exactly what the painter (and James) means by this, we must carefully re-examine the story. That the narrator, not the Monarchs, is James's central character is patent. It is he who undergoes the most subtle and dynamic inner change during the course of the narrative. The change is manifested primarily in his attitude toward the Monarchs. At first he views them from the commercial perspective: "Sitters my visitors in this case proved to be; but not in the sense I should have preferred"—*i.e.*, the *commercial* sense. When Major Monarch confesses, "We should like to make it pay," the painter immediately supposes that he means "pay the artist." Significantly, the narrator also looks at his art chiefly as a means "to perpetuate my fame" and "to make my fortune." Upon discovering that the Monarchs have no useful purpose in this scheme, he regards them with detached, even slightly cruel, amusement: "I had seized their type—I had already settled what I would do with it. Something that wouldn't absolutely have pleased them, I afterwards reflected." When he goodnaturedly attempts to take their point of view, he cannot help "appraising physically, as if they were animals on hire. . . ." The metaphor recurs when Mrs. Monarch is put "through her paces before him," like a prize mare. The extent of the painter's sympathy for her humiliating gesture is that he abstains from applauding. And, when she bursts into tears, he merely reassures her politely.

Compare this opening scene with the final one in which the Monarchs, stripped of everything but the wistful desire not to starve, voluntarily assume the services of menials. Here, the tears are those, not of Mrs. Monarch, but of the painter himself: "When it came over me, the latent eloquence of what they were doing, I confess that my drawing was blurred for a moment—the picture swam." His attitude has changed radically from what it was at the beginning of the story. He is now drool

involved with mankind. Though such involvement may have blurred his esthetic perspective, it has sharpened his moral insight; if he has lost something as an artist, he has gained infinitely more as a man. From his painful experience with the Monarchs James's narrator emerges with a finer understanding of the human situation and with a new awareness of what constitutes "the real thing" in human relationships: compassion.

This is the third and highest level of meaning in James's title, and it is this alone that justifies the artist's willingness to renounce his talent. Paradoxically, Henry James implies that only through such an attitude may the artist achieve true greatness. As he says in his preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, it is, after all, the "enveloping air of the artist's humanity—which gives the last touch to the worth of the work. . . ." And it is the latent moral value of the painter's "memory" which gives the last exquisite touch to the worth of "The Real Thing."

The Quest for Reality [in "The Beast in the Jungle"]

WALTER F. WRIGHT

. . . John Marcher, of "The Beast in the Jungle," . . . is obsessed with the question of his identity. Not that he is seeking to determine just what kind of inner nature he has, but that he must believe that he is a very special being, destined for an unusual if indeed not a unique fate. Marcher is at the beginning in the absolute center of his own universe, and only tragedy can shatter his world to let him build anew. Though it would not be proper to call Marcher Everyman, yet his predicament is only an accentuation of that in which any sensitive person may be entrapped.

Marcher is not a philosopher, and he is, likewise, not a psychologist. He cannot work out possible systems of metaphysics and choose the

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one which will give maximum rein to a creative imagination, nor is he interested in probing into the strange ways of the mind. Instead, he is possessed by a feeling that something much greater must be ~~in store~~ for him than appears to suffice for ordinary mortals. Worldly success would be meaningless; in fact, he is quite contented with his obscure office in the government. It is not the adulation of men that can prove to him who he really is; what is wanted is something he can feel. Indeed, he has already become so immersed in his pursuit of his special fate that he no longer believes he is seeking it; rather, it is something which he is convinced he cannot escape. To doubt its inevitability would be to destroy his universe. What alone remains is to seek for clues as to what the fate may be and how it is to present itself.

Because we have come to accept the belief that to find oneself one must lose oneself, and because we are confident that egoism is a prison, we have no trouble with the general pattern of Marcher's history. When he cannot see that May Bartram loves him so selflessly that she devotes her life to trying to help him, we can easily label Marcher a supreme egoist; and when, at the end, he comes to a bitter awareness of the love he has failed to perceive, we agree that the lesson is valid. He should have known. What, then, differentiates his tragedy from the commonplace? The answer is to be found in James's overtreatment, or what might again well be called one more turn of the screw. For what James gives us is not a mere warning that we must be unselfish, but something much deeper and subtler. The story becomes a quest into the nature of life itself. We dare not condemn Marcher lest we condemn a part of ourselves. Instead, we pity him exceedingly without danger of maudlin self-pity, and this because our emotions are aroused slowly as we come gradually to see the intellectual nature of his problem.

Marcher is acutely sensitive and intently conscientious. True, when he again sees May Bartram ten years after their previous meeting, he has remembered almost all the facts wrongly, whereas she has a most accurate recall. True, he misses the significance of her attempts, both by word and gesture, to tell him that she loves him. But he is, nevertheless, a man worthy of his fate. There are many things which he does intellectually notice and seek to understand, and he repeatedly thinks of May and tries to be kind to her. He is, indeed, fully her equal in capacity for comprehending and in sensitivity; there would be no point in narrating the story of a crude, arrogant boor.

Marcher's history is interpreted in reference to one single theme, and that theme is studied unwaveringly until its vastness has filled James's created universe. We need not go to abnormal psychology to realize that a mind can withdraw from the world outside and construct a dream—or nightmare—realm of its own. The normal man who is seriously introspective sometimes feels himself alone, possibly terrifyingly alone, and preoccupied exclusively with his own isolated being. We generally cut ourselves loose from such supposedly morbid thoughts or find them suddenly shattered by the encroachment of the external world. But what if we were not to be released or by a sheer act of revolt to release ourselves? Then we should have to meet the issues honestly and fully and submit ourselves to the schooling which isolation would bring. James does not grant to Marcher a breaking down of a prison wall by a mere display of will, nor does he make his preoccupation so weak that the exigencies of daily life will shatter his world of thought. He must live within it until he has understood its nature and is ready to depart.

The measure of Marcher's isolation is to be found in the contrast provided by the thoughts and emotions of May. May is not without an awareness of her own personal self, and she cannot escape from deep loneliness and sorrow. She falls into moods of sadness, however, only when her efforts to live in a world outside herself have failed, and she is quick to recover hope and excitement until the final overthrow. Having learned from Marcher ten years before of his strange absorption, she has found it a center for her own thoughts, and upon their meeting again she is caught up in a great romance of adventure. She will watch with him, and, naturally, she hopes that she can somehow play a part in shaping the fate which is to come; for she recognizes that it is something that must happen within Marcher's own mind. Having perceived that he is a man of uncommon sensitivity and depth of feeling, she has no reservation in identifying her own life with his. She is completely in love with him simply because she lives only with concern for penetrating his mental universe, seeing life as it must, she believes, seem to him, and trying to work out an interpretation of it from his perspective. In a sense she has accepted precisely the conditions which James himself accepted in creating Marcher, and all the creative power of her imagination is brought into play as it could not have been by a lesser task. Having early told him, "I'll watch with you," she can much later, after repeated disappointments, say to him, "If you've had your woman, I've had . . . my man."

Her statement is not to be misunderstood. He has not belonged to her in the usual sense, as she has had illusions both as to his nature and his fate; and she is yet to suffer most acutely at his hands. She has had him, however, in a much deeper sense. She has lived because of him as she could never otherwise have done, for she has "let this association give shape and colour to her own existence"; and her own ultimate identity, both for herself and for him, will be the product of her adventure. At the beginning she would sell that adventure short. Though sympathetic, she asks Marcher whether what so vaguely haunts him may not be "but the expectation—or at any rate the sense of danger, familiar to so many people—of falling in love?" Ironically, of course, her words are prophetic, but she cannot yet know how tragically accurate they are. Unlike Marcher, who can see his fate only as a beast which will sometime jump, she sees it as something always at work. When he assures her that it is "in the lap of the gods," she replies, "Yes, . . . of course one's fate's coming, of course it *has* come, in its form and its own way, all the while." She is only human, however, and she cannot see the end of the affair; she can read only what she has seen, and her most imaginative conjecture cannot transcend the evidence. Consequently, she once mistakenly tells Marcher, in veiled reference to his quest and to her own secret, "You'll never find out."

In the last scene between them her emotions range from fragile hope to despair. As we first see her through Marcher's eyes she appears detached from life: ". . . she was the picture of a serene and exquisite but impenetrable sphinx, whose head, or indeed all whose person, might have been powdered with silver. She was a sphinx, yet with her white petals and green fronds she might have been a lily too—only an artificial lily. . . ." We must accept Marcher's portrait as describing what May herself has tried to seem, as she has gradually become more secretive in expressing her feelings toward him and presumably in acknowledging them to herself. In accord with her withdrawal, she tells him, "I've shown you, my dear, nothing." Suddenly she admits to a hope of yet showing him, though her words are still sphinxlike in ambiguity—". . . if it should happen"—and, with those words, she suddenly, though fatally ill, seems youthful again. She is still not an infallible prophet; for, when asked by Marcher whether he will "consciously suffer," she can only reply, from what she knows, "Never!" She has revised her earlier view: "What I mean isn't what I've always meant. It's different." It would appear that she is trying to say that, whereas she had once thought that he would come to miss her, she now realizes that he will not. But even now she refuses to mind her own prophetic words and moves toward Marcher timidly in one last effort to reverse the pattern of fate which she has tried so hard to accept. When he still does not see, she can do no more. "Don't you know—now," she asks, and she gets in reply, "I know nothing."

May's adventure has ended. When asked, "What then has happened?" she can only lament, "What *was* to." For her the beast has jumped. For Marcher, however, recognition is yet to come. His obtuseness seems complete, and the reader, no more than May, can see how light can ever penetrate. And yet the preparation for enlightenment has been going on "all the while," for the last stage in his history is to be no arbitrary verdict by James; it will result from all that has gone before.

When one thinks of May's attempts to reveal her love and the cruel effect upon her of Marcher's blindness, one is tempted to consign him to outer darkness. Yet there have been very significant clues which are unobtrusive simply because Marcher himself does not perceive their drift. He *has* had his woman, even as May has had her man. She may have meant only to express her loyalty, but, ironically, her words are profoundly true in a very different sense. Marcher has been constantly aware of her, even though in an oblique way. He has acted out his role with concern for how it will seem to her. In the very beginning he singled her out as the only person to whom he could reveal his innermost thought, and, while wearing a mask before all others, he has later been unashamed in his dependence on her. Almost immediately after they have met anew he senses an affinity: "He had thought of himself so long as abominably alone, and lo he wasn't alone a bit. . . . So he had endless gratitude to make up." He wants to believe that he is carrying his burden alone, yet he is willing to be "selfish just a little" in having May's understanding. He buys her birthday presents, and whenever he fears that he has been selfish, he tries to atone. As the years go by, he fears that he may lose her, and he feels sorry for her: "What if she should have to die before knowing, before seeing—?" At the moment and for a long time to come he cannot, to be sure, make her more than a helpmate in the search for his fate, and he must believe that her own death cannot be the thing fated, for this would be "an abject anticlimax."

In the last meeting, however, despite his blindness and the excruciating cruelty he commits, Marcher has his woman more than at any time before. He is under a partial illusion, of course, when he sees her as a sphinx or an artificial lily, and he is self-centered in believing for a moment that she will be "capable even yet of helping him." When he senses, however, that she is dying, he feels that his own life will end, indeed that her death represents, after all, the leap of the beast. Such a fate would be the "common doom" rather than something rare, "but poor Marcher at this hour judged the common doom sufficient."

There is no reason why May's death should suddenly bring recognition; reflection is needed for its meaning to take form, and loneliness is required to complete the sense of loss. At first Marcher feels a lack of any mark of distinction such as bereavement should presumably bring. Then there comes a realization that all else is "vulgar and vain" in comparison with what he once knew. The shift from looking inward comes in a dramatic manner. In his imagination Marcher creates a second, "his younger self." He can see things as they ought to seem to this other person, and as his thoughts turn more to May he has a "sense that he once *had* lived." On this sense he is "dependent . . . not alone for a support but for an identity." In short his true identity begins to reveal itself to him only as he finds his imagination playing upon a reconstructed past in which Marcher lives in the imagined younger self and is no longer oppressed with consciousness of his present self. It is May who has given him whatever identity he values. There is still some egoism, but it is rapidly departing. When at May's grave he sees another man whose face cannot conceal his grief, Marcher is at last ready to respond to what it has to reveal. Here James adds a significant author's comment: "We allow him at any rate the benefit of the conviction, struggling up for him at the end, that, whatever might have happened or not happened, he would have come round of himself to the light." Chance has provided the immediate impulse, but Marcher is responsible for the ensuing vision: "He had seen *outside* of his life, not learned it within, the way a woman was mourned when she had been loved for herself . . . and what he presently stood there gazing at was the sounded void of his life."

As James interprets Marcher's thoughts we must remember that the judgments are not precisely James's own, for Marcher condemns himself unreservedly: "The fate he had been marked for he had met with a vengeance—he had emptied the cup to the lees; he had been the man of his time, *the* man, to whom nothing on earth was to have happened." Actually his verdict is untrue, for he has at last seen May Bartram and appreciated her excellence. Indeed, his recognition and his deep sense of loss are the more poignant because he now knows what it means to love May for herself. In his recognition he sees the beast in not one but two symbolic images. Thinking again of the last parting, he sees the beast as having then sprung: ". . . it had sprung in that twilight of the cold April when, pale, ill, wasted, but all beautiful, and perhaps even then recoverable, she had ~~risen~~ from her chair to stand before him and let him imaginably guess. . . ." It is only now, however, that the full consciousness of that farewell comes to him, and so it is now that the spring actually occurs: "He saw the Jungle of his life and saw the lurking beast; then, while he looked, perceived it, as by a stir of the air, rise, huge and hideous, for the leap that was to settle him. His eyes darkened —it was close; and, instinctively turning, in his hallucination, to avoid it, he flung himself, face down, on the tomb." The final gesture is especially fitting, for he has once more turned to May for compassion and help.

John Marcher may not understand more than the sorrow-ravaged man, and in a general sense his love for May is common. If it were not so, it would lack universal significance, but commonness is not cheapness. How universal, however, is the rest of his experience? Here and there the Ancient Mariner recognized a man who could comprehend his rime, and presumably Marcher's fellow in bereavement is among those who can read his desperate gesture aright. What has happened to Marcher has come through his own arduous struggle, and yet it is, at the same time, essentially like an act of grace. He has had at the beginning to be a man capable of profound feeling, and he has had to suffer much before purification could come. Yet the gift of May's love and excellence is completely free once he has the perspective to understand. In "The Liar" the artist says that he likes to paint men at the end of their lives, when the portrait is complete. Whatever may hereafter happen to Marcher, his true portrait is now finished. It is the portrait of a man who has experienced remorse, pity, and, most of all, wonder. In these is his identity.

Stephen Crane

Stephen Crane: Author in Transition

Ray B. West, Jr.

> I renounced the clever school in literature. It seemed to me that there must be something more in life than to sit and cudgel one's brains for the clever and witty expedients. So I developed all alone a little creed of art which I thought was a good one. Later I discovered that my creed was identical with the one of Howells and Garland and in this way I became involved in the beautiful war between those who say that art is man's substitute for nature and we are most successful in art when we approach nearest to nature and truth.

This statement, written by Stephen Crane at the beginning of his career (1892), may have had much to do with the frequent early classification of his work as "naturalistic." We know better today, but what do we know? We know that later critics, impressed less by *Maggie:*

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A Girl of the Streets than by *The Red Badge of Courage* and the later short stories, called him impressionist. We know that recent criticism, impressed by Crane's use of certain highly charged metaphors, labels him symbolist.

The use of such categories reflects the critic's need for classification in the final disposition of an author, but there is a sense in which the most important authors defy such pigeonholing. Stephen Crane is one of these. His short career, lasting less than ten years, was marked by change. Crane was a transitional figure. He participated in "the beautiful war" between cleverness and truth for a while, but, as an artist he was never wholly committed to it. There is as much difference between *Maggie*, published the year in which he made the statement above, and the short story "The Blue Hotel," written in 1898, as there usually is in works written by two altogether different authors. *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) and "The Open Boat" (1897) stand somewhere between the two, containing qualities of each, but representing in themselves identities apart from each other and from the preceding and following works.

There is, however, an aspect of Crane's work where he changed very little. All his fiction, regardless of technique, dealt with nature as a force affecting his characters. In *Maggie*, which is the most anomalous of his major works, not the most characteristic, as the early critics seemed to believe, nature is a force thwarted by social evil, where natural impulses lead not to happiness, but to misfortune. In *The Red Badge of Courage*, natural forces compete within the person of the hero as well as in the conflict of opposing armies. In "The Open Boat," man is confronted by nature directly and close at hand, the power of nature naturally *and* symbolically portrayed. In "The Blue Hotel," it is the uncontrollable urge of fear, set against an implacable nature, that determines the events of the story.

In Crane's life, as in his works, there is a certain consistency within inconsistency. As a young student, journalist, and author, he felt the need to rebel against prevailing social and literary attitudes. As a literary rebel, he should surprise no one by seeing himself engaged in a dispute between opposing literary armies. Because he considered the establishment of his own creed as a choice between extremes (as in actual warfare), it would be surprising had he not gone to an extreme in formulating it in his early years. It would have been equally surprising, had he not followed this by plunging into life as a reporter of man's greed and misery, associating by choice with Bowery bums in soup kitchens and flop houses, becoming a defender and friend of drunks and prostitutes, viewing this life as the real thing. Crane appears consistent in his regard for the life of the American West, conceiving of it as a land of action and traveling across it to experience the "real" life of cowboys, bandits, and revolutionaries. He sought to learn the truth about war by visiting battlefields in Cuba and Greece.

Yet Crane was at home in literary discussions of a much cleverer sort than his rejection of "the clever school" would indicate. He became friends with Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and Ford Madox Hueffer, whose concerns with literary matters were anything but simple. Socially, too, his home in England, where he spent the last years of his life, was a far cry from the New York slums and the western plains. He lived in Brede Place, an ancient and pretentious English house, taking pride in its aristocratic traditions, taking pleasure, too, in such social amenities as dressing for dinner, perhaps from an unconscious urge to make the manner conform fittingly to the background.

The inconsistency in Crane's writing can best be exemplified by calling attention to the fact that, while Crane believed that true art should derive from the artist's own experience, many of his works, including his most famous novel, came before he had had any personal experience of the kind depicted. Also, when he did write from experience, he showed himself not reluctant to modify the factual events wherever necessary to serve his aesthetic ends.

R. W. Stallman explains Crane's inconsistency by saying Crane wanted it both ways, which may have been true in the later period and in his private life, but such an explanation tends to make Stephen Crane's career, short as it was, too static. It seems likely that the first significant change to be traced in his writing began during the composition of *The Red Badge of Courage*. Beginning it, as he admits, as a potboiler ("something that would take the boarding school element—you know the kind?"), Crane became interested in the subject and had to do it, as he explained, "in my own way." The question here would seem to be, what was his *own way?*

Certainly the way of *The Red Badge of Courage* is not the way of *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, for his first novel had been an attempt to achieve a kind of reportorial objectivity of the kind Garland used to portray the struggles of the frontier farmer—a method pursued for the sake of "nature and truth." *Maggie* portrayed scenes of poverty and low life with a detail that now impresses us only mildly, but that shocked the usual reader of the 1890's. The youthful Crane undoubtedly considered it an exposé of society's ills. We know he was aware of its shock value, for he spoke of its effect upon "Mr. Podsnap" and "Mrs. Grundy." It remains an early example of the kind of novel that Virginia Woolf described (in writing about Arnold Bennett) as leaving the reader primarily with the feeling that he should sit down and write out a check for some worthy cause.

In *The Red Badge of Courage*, "the cause" has almost wholly disappeared; or, rather, has become transformed into "the subject." If we ask ourselves how this occurred, we shall undoubtedly be asking a question that Crane, consciously or unconsciously, asked himself, particularly during the several times he studied, revised, and rewrote his manuscript. Taking his materials more lightly than he did in his first novel, he may, in the beginning, have played down any evidence of "a cause," for there is no sign anywhere that he intended to write an antiwar novel, as he had written an antisociety novel in *Maggie*. With his sensitivity to his material become acute (for he was not a born hack), Crane discovered his subject, which was not *war* but *nature*—war being merely the occasion for the work, not the theme of it. The two armies Crane saw not so much as social aggregates as he saw them as accumulations of natural forces in opposition.

To make this point clear, Crane described the two armies in beast imagery: the army "stretches out on the hills, resting"; it "awakened and began to tremble with eagerness"; a river "purled at the army's feet"; the opposing army's campfires are portrayed as "red, eyelike . . . set in the low brow of distant hills." They are like two monsters confronting each other, and, indeed, Crane likens the regiment to "one of those moving monsters wending with many feet."

In such an atmosphere Crane placed his characters, a small company of almost nameless soldiers who not only have to take into consideration the power of nature that surrounds them but must also consider "nature" within—their own at times uncontrollable urge to run or rage to fight. In the midst of such forces, they depict subtle emotional attachments "born of the smoke and danger of death."

Crane's attitude towards nature was not too different from Mark Twain's, but their manners of utilizing it to create fiction (except in the late stories of each) were entirely different. Twain introduced nature through the various frontier myths in order to define his characters. Crane used his characters, with their varying attitudes, as a means of defining the role nature plays in determining human events. Left alone, Huck Finn would have been able to adjust easily to the natural life. It was only when he listened to the contradictory voices of society that he became confused. No character in Crane's works ever begins by understanding nature; he comes gradually to such understanding. He is as much a "characteristic" as he is a character, given such names as "the Easterner," "the cowboy," "the correspondent," "the oiler," and "the cook." Even Henry Fleming, the protagonist of *The Red Badge of Courage*, is seldom named, and his companions are known mostly as "the tall soldier," "the loud soldier," or according to their rank in the army.

Henry Fleming is known mostly as "the youth," and it is through his eyes that we see the events of the novel, through his developing consciousness that we are made to feel the impact of those events; and we both see and feel them in terms of nature. Henry runs away from his first battle, then discovers that behind the lines "Nature has gone tranquilly on with her golden process in the midst of so much devilment." When he does later stand up and fight, he realizes "that he had been a barbarian, a beast." With the war over, he sees again that "He had been an animal blistered and sweating in the heat and pain of war," *but* "He turned now with a lover's thirst to images of tranquil skies, fresh meadows, cool brooks—an existence of soft and eternal peace."

The suggestion is that it was not nature that was in upheaval, threatening man, but man in confusion, blaming nature. When the men gave themselves naturally and wholeheartedly to the battle, either they were killed or they became heroes: "The imperturbable sun shines on insult and worship." But they do gain a new knowledge of themselves and respect for their comrades. After the final battle, Henry Fleming "felt a quiet manhood, nonassertive but of sturdy and strong blood. He knew that he would no more quail before his guides wherever they should point. He had been to touch the great death, and he found that, after all, it was but the great death. He was a man."

On this point, Crane became more specific in his next important work, "The Open Boat." Four men who have been shipwrecked find themselves in a small boat on a heavy sea, closely and intimately confronting the great force of nature—the waves that "were most wrongfully and barbarously abrupt and tall." In the midst of danger, there is here, as there was in the war, "a subtle brotherhood of men . . . established. . . . it dwelt in the boat, and each man felt it warm them." When they encounter difficulties in reaching shore because of the heavy rollers, the spokesman of the tale (the correspondent) cries to himself: "If I am going to be drowned—if I am going to be drowned—if I am going to be drowned, why, in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees?"

His thrice-repeated cry, so much like an incantation, leads him to the following contemplation:

> When it occurs to a man that nature does not regard him as important, and that she feels she would not maim the universe by disposing of him, he at first wishes to throw bricks at the temple, and he hates deeply the fact that there are no bricks and no temples. Any visible expression of nature would surely be pelleted with his jeers.
>
> Then, if there be no tangible thing to hoot, he feels, perhaps, the desire to confront a personification and indulge in pleas, bowed to one knee, and with hands supplicant, saying, "Yes, but I love myself."
>
> A high cold star on a winter's night is the word he feels that she says to him. Therefore he knows the pathos of the situation.

The pathos is that nature does not care, and all that is left is for man to care for himself.

Three of the men in the story do reach shore safely, but a fourth, the oiler, drowns in the surf.

> It seemed that instantly the beach was populated with men with blankets, clothes, and flasks, and women with coffee-pots and all the remedies sacred to their minds. The welcome of the land to the men from the sea was warm and generous; but a still and dripping shape was carried slowly up the beach, and the land's welcome for it could only be the different and sinister hospitality of the grave.

For the drowned oiler there was, pathetically, none of the ceremony accorded the survivors. But nature was not to blame. The man had been simply too exhausted, or too unlucky, and such is the danger man runs when he finds himself pitted against nature. Yet there were rewards in the comradeship of the struggle and in the hospitality of the welcome given the survivors, even in the beauty of nature viewed from a respectful distance. As it had been with Henry Fleming after the war, so it was for the men after their ordeal.

> When it came night, the white waves paced to and fro in the moonlight, and the wind brought the sound of the great sea's voice to the men on the shore, and they felt that they could then be interpreters.

With the knowledge that nature was powerful, but indifferent to the plight of man, Crane had achieved a general definition of nature and of man's relation to it. He had also hinted at a relationship between man and man, portraying it as a form of ceremony, as something *sacred* to men's minds; but he had shown it as something secondary to the struggle, almost accidental. He had also hinted at the part chance plays in man's relationship with nature, but again he had not dealt with it in detail, had not himself, perhaps, discovered how great a part he really conceived it to be. These were to be the separate concerns of his last two important works, "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" and "The Blue Hotel."

It would be too much to say that "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" is a small "comedy of manners"; yet, if it is not, we have no traditional name for such a story. True, these are not the "manners" of Henry James, for James, when he portrayed the American westerner, showed him as one with few manners. In the West, however, where Crane's story is set, certain forms were in the process of development that, simple though they might be, smoothed the way for social intercourse. In fact, it would not be saying too much to suggest that where the usual institutions of society were so few, manners (or something like manners) had often to bear the full weight of preserving public order. Crane calls it humorously Man's "duty to his friends, or of their idea of his duty," and he centers his short comedy about an incident involving two violations of a code of duty. The first occurs when Jack Potter, the town marshal, leaves Yellow Sky and, without notifying his fellow townsmen, gets married. As Crane tells us:

> . . . such was Potter's thought of his duty to his friends, or of their idea of his duty, or of an unspoken form which does not control men in these matters, that he felt he was heinous. He had committed an extraordinary crime. Face to face with this girl in San Antonio, and spurred by his sharp impulse, he had gone headlong over all the social hedges.

The second violation is in Potter's relation to Scratchy Wilson, the simple former badman, who is a wonder with a gun. When Scratchy is sober, we are told, "he wouldn't hurt a fly," but when he is under the influence of spirits, he sets out with guns blazing in search of a fight. He plays with the town as if it were a toy, terrorizing it and disrupting its order: storekeepers lock their doors and housewives pull closed their shutters. At such times, it is the marshal's duty to confront Scratchy, to get the drop on him and lock him up until he becomes sober. This time, however, when Scratchy goes on his spree, Potter has not yet returned from San Antonio, so the playful ceremony of reconciliation cannot be performed, or so at least the citizens believe. After Scratchy has amused himself by shooting at a dog, putting a few bullets into the saloon door, and shooting up the house of his best friend, he goes in search of the marshal. Potter arrives, not from his house as was expected, but from a side street, up from the railway station with his bride. At first Scratchy is furious, thinking Potter has attempted to sneak up on him; then, when the marshal tells him he has no gun, he is incredulous. "Don't tell me no lie like that. There ain't a man in Texas ever seen you without no gun," he says. Potter replies: "I ain't got a gun because I've just come from San Anton' with my wife. I'm married." For Scratchy this revelation is like "a glimpse of another world." He lowers his revolver. The code of Yellow Sky, and particularly the relationship between Scratchy and the marshal, did not allow for so unforeseen an event. Stephen Crane leaves no doubt about how we are to understand it. Scratchy, he says, "was not a student of chivalry; it was merely that in the presence of this foreign condition he was a simple child of the earlier plains."

Lacking the proper "form" to complete his "play," Scratchy must retire from the game, but in retiring he is no different from Jack Potter when he decided to propose to the girl in San Antonio. He was conforming to an unspoken form. That Crane presents his action as a game does not minimize the seriousness of his concern with manners. In fact, by preserving a comic tone and the exaggeration of comedy, he emphasizes the significance of social definition; for if we are to say what the story is about, we must say that it is the tale of a childlike man confronting a new, and more complex, situation than his simple code allows for. Scratchy Wilson differs only in degree from James's Christopher Newman, but he is a far cry from the characters of Crane's *Maggie*, whose predatory lives reflect only the pathos of squalor or the cheating forms of a false sophistication.

Despite the rightness of the ending of "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" as Crane wrote it, it must have occurred to the author that the incident could have ended otherwise. If the rage of Scratchy had been less play, more the result of a genuine emotion, Scratchy might very well have shot Jack Potter. So far as theme is concerned, the story could as easily have depicted the breakdown of a code of manners as it does the operation of "an unspoken form." Whether such a possibility occurred to Crane or not, the theme of such a breakdown is embodied in his later story, "The Blue Hotel."

"The Blue Hotel" opens with a character known only as "the Swede" and two other strangers as they leave the transcontinental express train at a small Nebraska town during a snowstorm. The three men engage rooms in a nearby family hotel, then settle down to an evening of waiting in the hotel's public parlor. It is evident at once from the peculiarity of the

Swede's actions that he is a "badly frightened man." What he fears, we soon surmise, is the unfamiliarity of the surroundings, this unfamiliarity heightened by the storm outside and by the presence of men he does not know. These men are the two strangers, called by Crane only "the Easterner" and "the cowboy," and the hotel landlord and his son. The Swede appears to believe himself in the West of legendary badmen, and he soon begins to feel that the others have designs upon him, that he will be robbed or beaten or killed. When he announces that he will leave, his fellow travelers have no regrets, for the Swede has been obstreperous in speech and act; but the landlord considers it his duty as host to pacify his guest. He takes him to his room and gives him a drink of whiskey. He extolls the town of Romper, saying there will be "a line of ilictric street-cars" here by spring, and "there's a new railroad goin' to be built down from Broken Arm to here." He enumerates the four churches, describes the "big brick school house" and the factory. "Why," he says, "in two years Romper'll be a met-tro-pol-is." He shows the picture of his "little girl that died." He tells the Swede that his oldest son is a lawyer.

Meanwhile, in the public room, the other men have been discussing the Swede. The Easterner says: "It seems to me this man has been reading dime novels, and he thinks he's right out in the middle of it—the shootin' and stabbin' and all." "But," the cowboy says, emphasizing what the landlord had been attempting to tell the Swede, "This ain't Wyoming, ner none of them places. This is Nebrasker." "Yes," the landlord's son adds, "an' why don't he wait till he gits *out West?*"

When the Swede returns to the room, the whiskey and the landlord's words seem to have calmed him. He leaves the room for a glass of water, and the landlord confirms the Easterner's guess: "It was only that he was from the East, and he thought this was a tough place." When the landlord's son insists that he still thinks the Swede "too fresh," his father reprimands him:

> "I keep a hotel," he shouted. "A hotel, do you mind? A guest under my roof has sacred privileges. He is to be intimidated by none. Not one word shall he hear that would prejudice him in favor of goin' away. I'll not have it. There's no place in this here town where they can say they iver took a guest of mine because he was afraid to stay here."

Nevertheless, the son, Johnnie, is right. The Swede is too fresh; but even when the Swede claps the landlord too heartily on his injured shoulder, the landlord's code prevents him from taking offense. When the Swede proposes a game of cards, an entertainment he has formerly rejected, the two travelers and Johnnie unenthusiastically sit down with him. They have played only a short time when the Swede accuses Johnnie of cheating. In the altercation that follows, Johnnie challenges the Swede to a fight. Although the others try to dissuade the two men, they finally go outside the house to do battle. Here the Swede's fears revive when he realizes that the others all want Johnnie to win, but the landlord, still true to the code, insists that it will be a fair fight.

In the fight that follows, the Swede finally wins. Weary, but flushed with victory, he now prepares to leave the hotel. Even the landlord raises no more objections. The Swede has put himself outside the small society of the hotel now finally through an arrogance in victory that alienates even his considerate host. As he makes his way through the blankness of wind and snow, the author-narrator (the Easterner) takes the occasion to comment:

> He might have been in a deserted village. We picture the world as thick with conquering and elate humanity, but, here, with the bugles of the tempest pealing, it was hard to imagine a peopled earth. One viewed the existence of man then as a marvel, and conceded a glamour of wonder to these lice which were caused to cling to a whirling, fire-smitten, ice-locked, disease-stricken, space-lost bulb. The conceit of man was explained by this storm to be the very engine of life. One was a coxcomb not to die in it.

The Swede makes his way to a saloon. In the room are a bartender and four men playing cards, one of them a professional gambler. The gambler, we are told, holds his position in the town by a rigidly defined code, as elaborate as that held by the landlord. He was allowed to fleece unwary travelers and boastful farmers, but he was considered by the men of the town as an admirable and trustworthy person. The Swede comes among these men, full of pride in his victory, further elated at having found asylum from the storm. He attempts to get the men to drink with him. Because of his arrogant manner, they all refuse. Finally, he attempts to force the gambler to take a drink, grasping him by the throat and dragging him from his chair. The gambler pulls a knife and stabs the Swede, piercing, as Crane says, "this citadel of virtue, wisdom, power . . . as easily as if he had been a melon." Where the man fell, his eyes seemed "fixed upon a dreadful legend that dwelt atop of the cash-machine: 'This registers the amount of your purchase.' "

The story does not end here, although there have been readers who maintained that it should. The most recent is R. W. Stallman, who has written most forceably on the subject:

> This point marks the legitimate end of the story. Crane spoiled the whole thing by tacking on a moralizing appendix. The off-key tone is

> at odds with the tone of the preceding part, and the theme that his beginning prepared for stands at odds with the trumped-up theme announced in the totally irrelevant and non-ironic conclusion.[1]

Mr. Stallman's objection could be more easily examined had he stated clearly what he thought the theme to be that Crane had prepared us for. Given the broadly ironic clue of the cash register, we might say that the story illustrates how man's actions determine the kind and amount of punishment he is to receive. But this would be contrary to all that Crane had said about his characters in the past, even earlier in the same story, where he speaks of men as lice, peopling an extremely unpleasant globe. In his earlier stories, he had shown man "as a marvel," exactly because he had found a means to exist in a universe that appeared uncaring. It might be that Mr. Stallman finds a successful irony in the story at this point by seeing the legend on the cash register as meaning exactly the opposite of what it says; but, again, there seems little in the story to justify such a reading, and the method itself would be contrary to Crane's normal use of such symbols.

In the ending that Crane supplied, such questions are resolved, and the conclusion is achieved with a more telling irony than if the story had merely ended with the Swede's death. In the final section, Crane shows us the Easterner and the cowboy meeting at a later date, when they discuss the light sentence given the gambler for killing the Swede. They speculate on various things that might have been done to prevent the death. The Easterner says: "The Swede might not have been killed if everything had been square." "Might not have been killed?" exclaims the cowboy. "Everything square? Why, when he said that Johnnie was cheatin' and acted like such a jackass? And then in the saloon he fairly walked up to get hurt?" The cowboy's conclusions are just about what any reader's would be at this point in the story, but they reduced the Easterner to a rage because he knew better. With a reversal as neatly ironic as anything he had ever written, Crane has the Easterner reply: "Let me tell you something. Listen! Johnnie *was* cheating."

With this bit of information, the whole meaning of the story has taken on another dimension. It was not merely the Swede who was responsible, who had failed out of simplicity, ignorance, and fear; it was the Easterner, who knew but had not the nerve to say that Johnnie was cheating; it was even the hotel keeper, who allowed the fight to go on against his better judgment; above all, of course, it was Johnnie, who even more wilfully than the Swede had violated one of the simplest of

[1] *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus* (New York, 1952), pp. 482–483.

all codes by cheating in a game played "for fun." As the Easterner says: "We are all in it. We, five of us, have collaborated in the murder of this Swede."

It is clear now that the machine did lie. It did not register the true amount. But a machine that even makes such a claim represents a reflector of man's confidence. The true machine is the universe—nature; and we already know what this machine registers concerning man—nothing. The story is about man's struggle for some identity in the face of nature's indifference. What motivates the struggle is man's conceit. His method of conducting it is to seek the protection of the code that binds him to his fellowmen. Johnnie and the gambler, although they violated one code, were protected by another. The code protected the cowboy because he was too stupid to know what had happened; it protected the Easterner because he was too shrewd to admit he knew it had been violated. The Swede was insensitive to the code that bound the others, so he confronted them as he confronted the storm, fearfully but defiantly. Ironically, he was right to have feared for his life, but for the wrong reason. No one had designs on him, least of all nature. It was ignorance that killed him, ignorance of the manner by which men cling together for protection against both the inner and the outer nature. His ignorance of the code dislocated the social structure, which dislocation, like a chain reaction, affected all of those social atoms—men—with whom he came in contact. Events exploded in the Swede's death and the gambler's crime. As the Easterner rightly surmises, the events that followed the fight at the blue hotel might have been predicted, for they were as logically determined (and as machine-like) as the pressing of a number on the cash register.

If this seems a pessimistic view of nature, it is not only the logical end of Crane's concern with the subject, it is the logical end of America's concern. When Hawthorne and Melville questioned Emerson's view of nature as the benevolent image of the Over-Soul, they revealed an ambiguity in nature that begged closer inspection. Stephen Crane's examination showed nature to be as unmotivated as a machine with which man had come only accidentally in contact. Man's villainy and his virtue were solely the responsibility of society. Social relationships were governed by codes of conduct that man could violate only at his own—and his fellows'—peril. Henry Fleming of *The Red Badge of Courage*, the correspondent of "The Open Boat," Scratchy Wilson, and the Swede are all exemplars of this discovery in increasing degrees of complexity.

Crane's subject, then, was not so much "nature" as man's relation with his fellows. In his treatment of these relations, he probably moved as near to the interests of Henry James as he had been near the interests of Howells and Garland at the beginning of his career. In method, too, he moved from the rugged "veritism" of *Maggie* to the ironic symbolism of "The Blue Hotel." Yet he did not become another James, as he had never been completely won to the naturalists. What he did was suggest the proper means of bridging the two extremes between the naturalists' too intense interest in life at the expense of art and Henry James's interest in forms at the expense of nature. And he did, even more than Garland or James, anticipate the future interests of American letters. Hemingway's examination of the worlds of violence and the codes that governed them appears, at times, little more than an extension of Crane's work. William Faulkner's last man, he with the "puny inexhaustible voice, still talking" in the face of imminent destruction, is an image that Crane would have understood and approved. Almost single-handedly, in an era of declining greatness and vapid gentility, Crane not only kept the tradition of honest investigation alive, he made it meaningful for generations to follow.

Theodore Dreiser

Theodore Dreiser and the Divided Stream

Charles Child Walcutt

The divided stream of American transcendentalism is the source and indeed the being of what is called the naturalistic movement in our fiction. The essence of transcendentalism is to be found in Emerson's assertion that Nature is the symbol of Spirit. This means that what is Ideal or Absolute as Spirit is translated into physical laws and perfectly embodied (or incarnated) as Nature. But Spirit and Nature are not actually separate for the transcendentalist. They are terms he devises to identify two aspects of the One. Spirit lives in Nature; Nature reveals and embodies Spirit. Modern physicists have come to the same monistic position through their discovery that matter and energy are not different things but only different forms or expressions of the same thing. What seems ultimately to be an electric charge expresses itself as all the forms of the physical universe. Both energy and law are "superior" to matter, but they appear only in or through matter.

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Now the transcendentalist called the same elements Spirit and Nature. The former was accessible to Intuition or inspiration; the latter to scientific investigation. Emerson said, "Nature is the symbol of Spirit," and "The axioms of physics translate the law of ethics." Here is the whole system. But the system did not stay whole. The monist stream did not stay One. Just as the language of analysis initially divided it with two words, so time and experience divided it into poles of optimism and pessimism, freedom and determinism, will and fate, social reformism and mechanistic despair. The optimism and idealism of Spirit could not remain identified with the dazzling but terrifying preoccupation with the forces of alien nature, for the Nature which was assumed to be a version of man's spirit and therefore of his will appeared under scientific analysis as a force which first controlled man's will and presently made it seem that his freedom was an illusion, that there was no such thing as will but only chemicals performing reactions which could (theoretically, at least) be predicted.

This is the divided stream. It accounts, originally, for America's devotion to facts, to things, to order, efficiency, and knowledge, for her belief that the liberation of the human spirit will be accomplished through the mastery of nature. And it thus accounts for the manner in which our devotion to science and fact has led us to the point where natural law seems to deny freedom and indeed the very concept of Spirit. It accounts for the fact that naturalism has been described, by competent critics, as both "optimistic progressivism" and "mechanistic determinism." Surprisingly enough, it can be both, for a novel that shows a hapless individual destroyed by social or hereditary forces over which he has no control can at the same time and through this very action express outraged idealism and demonstrate the need for reform through either social or scientific knowledge. A step further, however, and we come to the point where naturalism moves through a meaningless cosmos where non-human law is king and the individual can watch and experience and perhaps be destroyed, but cannot finally convince himself that human will or reason can dominate nature.

Theodore Dreiser drank his inspiration from both branches of the divided stream. He has been described as a pessimist, a socialist, a communist; he has been said to embody the antithesis of American transcendentalism; he has himself acknowledged beliefs in the meaninglessness of life, in the moral autonomy of the superman, in the ultimate value and dignity of the individual. In his later works he has placed mind above matter. And even while he was writing his early books he believed in a mystical Cosmic Consciousness that one would hardly have suspected from reading those books. His mixture of despair and idealism, of wonder and fear, of pity and guilt, of chemistry and intuition has given us the most moving and powerful novels of the naturalistic tradition. Examined chronologically, they reveal naturalistic ideas struggling to find a structure by which the novel could move without turning upon crucial ethical choices. They also reveal a continuous *ethical* questioning of tradition, dogma, received morality, and social "justice." Thus they always contain the antithesis of their materialistic premises. Between the poles of this tension is Dreiser's "naturalism." It moves, during his literary career, through phases of objectivity, resignation, and protest toward the groping affirmation of spirit that presides over and, oddly, defeats his final work.

Psychologically, Dreiser is his own divided stream of pity and guilt, of wonder and terror, of objectivity and responsibility. He observes a world without meaning, yet he also responds to a compelling need to believe. Misery in any form moved the young Dreiser to tears. Throughout *A Book About Myself* one of the dominant notes is Dreiser's wondering sympathy for the pain which life inflicts in the form of hunger, weariness, and uncertainty on those whom poverty and suffering have already rendered inarticulate.

Dreiser's repeated references in his early books to the "chemical compound which is youth," the "chemic force" within the mind, "the chemic formula which works to reproduce the species," show that he believed in a sort of mechanistic psychology. He did not pretend to comprehend the workings of the mind, but he was *apparently* sure that there is nothing transcendental in it. This real but as yet unexplained phenomenon of human thought and vitality he deprived of some of its mystery by naming it "chemic." The notion that mental activity is a chemical reaction is not, of course, a full explanation of that activity, and nowhere does Dreiser suggest that it does constitute such a full explanation. He still recognized some wonderful mystery, some all-important force, which gives life its wonder and terror and meaning. Again and again in his autobiography, *A Book About Myself* (1922), he broods over the impermanence of life and his conviction that only living is of absolute value.

> When one was dead one was dead for all time. Hence the reason for the heartbreak over failure here and now; the awful tragedy of a love lost, a youth never properly enjoyed. Think of living and yet not living in so thrashing a world as this, the best of one's hours passing unused or not properly used. Think of seeing this tinkling phantas-

> magoria of pain and pleasure, beauty and all its sweets, go by, and yet being compelled to be a bystander, a mere onlooker, enhungered but never satisfied.

This yearning is everywhere in his books; it is a part of his temperament which we must feel in order to understand the peculiar qualities that he brought to his writing. As a materialist, then, he recognized, in *The "Genius"* (1923), that man is not in control of his destiny:

> Most of these young men (reporters) looked upon life as a fierce, grim struggle in which no quarter was either given or taken, and in which all men laid traps, lied, squandered, erred through illusion; a conclusion with which I now most heartily agree.

In this connection the account he gives of his first acquaintance with the works of Herbert Spencer, in about 1893, is worthy of quotation:

> I fear that I cannot make you feel how these things came upon me in the course of a few weeks' reading and left me numb, my gravest fears as to the unsolvable disorder and brutality of life eternally verified . . . There was of course this other (note the dichotomy) matter of necessity, internal chemical compulsion, to which I had to respond whether I would or no. I was daily facing a round of duties which now more than ever verified all that I had suspected and that these books proved. With a gloomy eye I began to watch how the chemical—and their children, the mechanical—forces operated through man and outside him, and this under my very eyes . . . and when I read Spencer I could only sigh. All I could think of was that since nature would not or could not do anything for man, he must, if he could, do something for himself; and of this I saw no prospect, he being a product of these selfsame accidental, indifferent and bitterly cruel forces.

Science did not appeal to Dreiser. He had had so much experience with human misery that it did not seem to him possible to achieve any reasoned explanation of the riddle of life. On the contrary he was endlessly impressed by the instances he saw of life's steady and purposeless flux: "What a queer, haphazard, disconnected thing this living was!" ". . . life is haphazard and casual and cruel; to some lavish, to others niggardly." "But as I wandered about I realized . . . that life was a baseless, shifting thing, its seeming ties uncertain and unstable and that that which one day we held dear was tomorrow gone, to come no more." "The tangle of life, its unfairness and indifference to the moods and longings of any individual, swept over me once more weighing me down far beyond the power of expression." This wonder at the ceaseless, confusing flux of life is elaborated in his book of "philosophy," the very title of which—*Hey Rub-a-Dub-Dub; A Book of the Mystery and Terror and Wonder of*

Life (1919)—is an expression of his characteristic attitude toward cosmic forces.[1]

The combination of his observations with his philosophy could produce only moral and ethical agnosticism; and indeed if his autobiography is to be relied upon Dreiser had lost faith in conventional moral codes long before he had come upon the writings of Spencer. We find him declaring, in *A Book About Myself*, that "I am inclined to suspect that the monogamous standard to which the world has been tethered much too harshly for a thousand years or more now is entirely wrong. I do not believe that it is Nature's only or ultimate way of continuing or preserving itself. Nor am I inclined to accept the belief that it produces the highest type of citizen." And not only did he distrust the unthinking Christian repression of sex—he was concerned with the importance of the sexual urge in normal human life and with the impossibility of giving an authentic or rounded picture of human activity without taking full cognizance of its ubiquitous pressure and stimulation. "Via sex gratification—or perhaps better, its ardent and often defeated pursuit—comes most or all that is most distinguished in art, letters and our social economy, but underneath each and every one of such successes must primarily be written a deep and abiding craving for women, or some one woman, in whom the sex desires of any one person for the time being are centered. 'Love' or 'lust' (and the one is but an intellectual sublimation of the other) moves the seeker in every field of effort," he wrote in *Hey Rub-a-Dub-Dub*.[2]

A warm, boundless human sympathy; a tremendous vital lust for life with a conviction that man is the end and measure of all things in a world which is nevertheless without purpose or standards; moral, ethical, and religious agnosticism; contact with the scientific thought of the late nineteenth century which emphasized the power and scope of mechanical laws over human desires; belief in a chemical-mechanistic explanation of the human machine; plus an overarching yearning for faith—these are the elements which Dreiser brought to the writing of his novels. Determinism did not attract him as a working hypothesis because he was more interested in the mystery and terror and wonder of life itself than in tracing those forces which might account for and so dispel the mystery.

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[1] Dreiser's wide and sympathetic vision of life, his willingness to see and think about its sordid side, make one respect him for failing to arrive at a categorical explanation for the meaning of it all. If the philosopher must withdraw into an ivory tower in order to round out his system, the man who deals with the whole moving pathos of life-as-it-is should not be without some admiration. The practice among academic critics of disposing of Dreiser as a "peasant" or a "journalist" who could not think things through is based, if it has a base, upon ignorance of his personal experience.

[2] This book was written in 1919 and consequently shows evidence of familiarity with the Freudian approach to sex. It may be remarked, however, that Dreiser's attitude toward problems of sex is substantially the same in all of his novels from 1900 to 1925.

Knowing Dreiser's life and character one avoids the pitfalls of assuming that his naturalism is derived primarily from other writers. Of literary "influences" it is sufficient to indicate that Dreiser had been urged to read Zola but had not read him when he wrote *Sister Carrie,* although he had been considerably impressed by a Zolaesque novel composed by one of his friends on a Chicago newspaper. On the other hand, he had gorged on Balzac as early as 1893-4. If literary influences were to be pursued, they would obviously point toward realism; but our concern here is to analyze the form which the naturalistic impulse received in his novels, rather than to search out the exact sources of that impulse in his reading.

Dreiser's "naturalism" found expression in four distinct stages. Different ideas about the body of theory just presented appear in succeeding novels and give them different significant forms,—until we come to his last novels, where the predominance of materialistic, non-teleological theory has gone, and in its place appears a solid affirmation of tradition and moral restraint as the values capable of resisting the deteriorating effects of modern society.

II

In the first stage, Dreiser was expounding his conviction of the essential purposelessness of life and attacking the conventional ethical codes which to him seemed to hold men to standards of conduct that had no rational basis in fact, while they condemned others without regard to what Dreiser thought might be the real merits of their situations. The first half of this program—expounding the purposelessness of life—is the backbone of his first novel, *Sister Carrie,* published in 1900. Through a queer juxtaposition of incidents, and with only small regard for the worthiness of their impulses, one character achieves fame and comfort while another loses his wealth, social position, pride, and finally his life.

Into this novel Dreiser has brought all the vivid reality of his own experience with the dreary, beaten, downtrodden life of those who have no money, background, sophistication, and no special talent. With a deep compassion that never assumes the right to pass moral judgment upon the actions of his characters, he shows Carrie Meeber coming to Chicago from the country, drearily passing from one ill-paid and health-breaking job to another, and at length, jobless and depressed by the thought of having to return defeated to the country, setting up housekeeping with Drouet, a "drummer" whom she had met on the train as she first entered the city.

With this social and financial advance, Carrie begins to recognize class differences, to long for "better" things, even to sense Drouet's limitations. Drouet's friend Hurstwood represents the next higher level of culture and wealth. He is manager of a prosperous saloon, he owns a fine house, and his family is eagerly climbing the social ladder. When he meets Carrie he falls desperately in love with her and, in what almost amounts to an abduction, he abandons his family, steals $10,000 from his employer, and flees with her through Canada and into New York.

From this point the fall of Hurstwood and the rise of Carrie are depicted in antiphonal relationship. Hurstwood's degeneration is a remarkable representation of the meaninglessness, almost unmotivated sort of tragedy that art had, until then, conspired to ignore. His wife's grasping jealousy and pettiness impel him towards Carrie, and his being seen with her gives his wife grounds for a divorce action. It is by the merest chance that he finds the safe open on the very night when he had planned to disappear. His theft of the money results from a frantic impulse which he is too weak to resist. When he tries to return the cash to the safe, he finds that the lock has clicked shut. So the theft is consummated by an accident. He is later forced to return the money, but he never recovers his self-esteem. In New York he takes a half interest in a second-rate saloon and after a time loses his investment. Then he dawdles, first looking for jobs, finally sitting in hotels instead of looking; at length he stays home, reading newspapers endlessly and hoarding the little money he has left. The change in his character from an affluent good-fellow to a seedy miser is convincing and pathetic. Carrie stays with him as long as she can; but when she gets a place in a stage chorus she leaves him in order to room with a girl who is dancing in the same chorus. Hurstwood goes down—to poverty, destitution, begging, starvation, and finally suicide.

As he is drawing nearer to his sordid death, Carrie climbs rapidly until she is earning what was to her an unheard-of salary, living in one of the finest hotels in the city, and receiving proposals and attentions from men as far superior to Hurstwood at his best as he had been to the flashy Drouet: "Even had Hurstwood returned in his original beauty and glory, he could not have allured her." The book ends on a note of uncertainty. Carrie is not to be thought of as having attained any final goal. She is still longing and wondering, "an illustration of the devious way by which one who feels rather than reasons may be led in the pursuit of beauty. Though often disillusioned, she was still waiting for that halcyon day when she should be led forth among dreams become real."

Contemporary reviewers denounced the sordid content and the amoral attitude. They saw no inevitable punishment for transgression and no suggestion that there ought to be, but they missed the moral overtones; for although Dreiser appeals to Nature and rejects conventional moral codes, he also gropes beyond Nature toward a Transcendental concept of Spirit. He defends Drouet's "natural" pursuit of Carrie and suggests that his "conscience" is society's imposition: "He would need to delight himself with Carrie as surely as he would need to eat his heavy breakfast. He might suffer the least rudimentary twinge of conscience in whatever he did, and *in just so far he was evil and sinning*" (italics are mine). But Drouet's spontaneity reflects—or at least promises—something higher than impulse. "We have but an infantile perception of morals. There is more in the subject than mere conformity to a law of evolution. It is yet deeper than conformity to things of earth alone." Later he writes that man will be free when the conflict within him between instinct and will has been resolved,—that is, when the division between imperfect impulse and imperfect reason has been transcended into what the Transcendentalists called Reason or Intuition. This development would erase the distinction between nature and Spirit.

A consciously scientific use of detail appears when Dreiser brings chemical physiology to the explanation of Hurstwood's mental condition as he is beginning his final downward plunge:

> Constant comparison between his old state and his new showed a balance for the worse, which produced a constant state of gloom or, at least, depression. Now it has been shown experimentally that a constantly subdued frame of mind produces certain poisons in the blood, called katastates, just as virtuous feelings of pleasure and delight produce helpful chemicals called anastates. The poisons generated by remorse inveigh against the system, and eventually produce marked physical deterioration. To these Hurstwood was subject.

This, in small compass, is a clear-cut instance of the influence of science upon Dreiser's method: he is approaching his problem with a new set of instruments. The chemical explanation for mental conditions is of a piece with the amoral outlook and change of focus away from ethical plot-conflict toward the dispassionate *observation* of life. This latter problem brings one to the heart of what is new in the form of *Sister Carrie*.

Structurally, the novel consists of the two life cycles which are opposed to each other in studied balance. What *Sister Carrie* exhibits that is most characteristically naturalistic is the complete absence of ethical plot-complication. The movement of the novel does not depend upon acts of will by the central figures. It is the movement of life—skillfully selected and represented by the artist, to be sure, but still a movement which has little resemblance to the typical plot that begins with a choice or crucial action and ends with the satisfaction of the forces set in motion by that choice. There is no suspense created because the art of the novelist is directed by an entirely different motive. It is the quality of the lives represented that moves the reader, not the excitement of what the characters do. Here Dreiser reflects the impressionism of Crane and strikes a note that we hear later in the work of Sherwood Anderson, where a very different sort of writer has in a different way presented the qualities of experience instead of choices and results. Having deprived his novel of the conventional structure, Dreiser supplies the two cycles—Carrie's rise and Hurstwood's descent. These two cycles embody the principle of change which Dreiser finds fundamental to all life and all natural processes. In a naïve mechanist's novel they would pretend to embody social laws. Not so with Dreiser.

Dreiser, primarily a novelist, never subordinates human values to philosophical implications. The reader is interested in Carrie as a person who faces problems comparable to his own; and if the reader is not to be offended by the course of the story, the successes and failures of the characters must in some way answer to the reader's notion of their worth as human beings. Because of this fact, ethical standards can hardly be eliminated from any novel. Carrie's rise, even though accidental, and not, by conventional standards, "deserved," is welcome because she is an appealing character; and Hurstwood's degeneration, distressing though it may be, is not unbearably offensive because Hurstwood has qualities which cause him to lose some of the reader's sympathy. The philosopher in Dreiser makes concessions to the novelist because his heart is in league with humanity. This is another way of saying that what happens in a piece of fiction must be probable, and probability includes the satisfaction, to some degree, of the moral sense. Hardy's *Return of the Native* appears to turn upon the cruellest coincidences, and yet each character in it experiences a morally probable fate. So with Dreiser. One cannot write stories in which, just as the crisis is approaching, the villain is killed by a falling meteor. Such things may occur in life, but they cannot in novels, which in their design and organization depict a truth that is free from the outrageous accidents of actuality. With these reservations, we may return to the assertion that *Sister Carrie* is organized to demonstrate the essential purposelessness of life. The plot structure of conventional fiction is abandoned for the new organization that answers to Dreiser's view of life.

But though he recognizes the operation of external forces, he is not, in *Sister Carrie,* concerned with an experimental demonstration of the nature of that operation. Rather he is concerned with the pathos of human life and with the constant inscrutable change that attends it. We come, in the last analysis, to a matter of emphasis: one may study the way external forces operate upon men, attempting to lay bare the secrets of their action; or one may see life through the eyes of the objects of these forces, with the wonder and terror of the changes unexplained. Dreiser does a little of both: he shows clearly enough how Hurstwood and Carrie change as they do; but mostly he is concerned with bringing out the shifting, uncertain, mysterious nature of experience as it appears when being acted upon by forces which it cannot fathom and which—most terrible truth—have no purpose that can be related to the purposes of men.

Dreiser believes in a determinism which destroys or modifies the moral view of conduct. He is, further, impressed by the inscrutability of fortune, the lack of meaning and purpose in the action of external forces. Between these two smothering convictions flourishes his affirmation—his belief in the vitality and importance of life. It is upon the latter that one's attention is directed in *Sister Carrie*. The inscrutable variations of fortune serve chiefly to underline the positive quality of life—shifting, elusive, unaccountable—that holds our attention, rather than the spectacle of carefully analyzed forces operating under "experimental" conditions.[3]

Jennie Gerhardt (1911) is a sort of companion-piece to *Sister Carrie,* with the same major ideas but a shift in emphasis. In the latter, conventional moral codes are assumed to be invalid, while the action is concerned with demonstrating the unpredictable flux of life. In *Jennie Gerhardt* this unpredictable flux is assumed, and the action turns upon the moral and ethical standards according to which society (supposedly) operates. We see how the life of a lovely and sympathetic woman is blighted because her conduct is "officially" immoral; and the effect of the story is to suggest that standard Christian morality is inadequate either to guide or to judge conduct in a world that does not, as Dreiser sees it, answer to the assumptions underlying that code.

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[3] The gap between Dreiser's work and the experimental novel of Zola is a wide one, for Dreiser does not make even a pretense of controlling his conditions and discovering truths about the nature of human psychology and physiology. Just where Zola, for example, would theoretically put most emphasis—i.e. in the extraction of laws about human nature—Dreiser is most uncertain and most sure that no certainty can be attained. To him such laws would be fruitless for the very reason that external conditions cannot ever be controlled—a fact of which all his experiences had convinced him.

Jennie is a girl to whom life "is a true wonderland. . . . From her earliest youth goodness and mercy had molded her every impulse." A wealthy and distinguished Senator discovers her scrubbing floors in his hotel and, enchanted by her beauty and charm, decides to marry her; but he dies suddenly, before the marriage, leaving Jennie pregnant. After the child is born, the disgraced family moves to Cleveland where Jennie presently meets Lester Kane, scion of a wealthy Cincinnati family. He is generous, forceful, direct, and the slightest bit coarse-grained. In spite of his wealth and good breeding, the reader is made to feel that he is, emotionally, less beautifully constructed than Jennie, though he is capable of appreciating her fine nature and is, indeed, worlds beyond her culturally. Most of the book is devoted to their changing relations. He keeps her in various apartments, supplying her liberally with money, always half intending to marry her but never quite making up his mind to disturb the comfortable *status quo*.

Then forces conspire to take Lester away from her. His father dies, leaving Lester's inheritance contingent upon his abandoning Jennie. His family brings all its persuasive force to bear. And, to sweep aside the last hesitation, Lester is attracted by a cultivated and wealthy widow who is deeply in love with him. As always, Jennie is wholly unselfish in wanting Lester to do what is best for himself—and it is he who is uncertain which way to turn, drawn at once by loyalty to Jennie, fascination for Mrs. Gerald, the desire to retain his accustomed wealth and to be active in his father's business, and the influence exerted by his family and the polite society which wants him to become finally "respectable." Social ostracism, combined with the loss of a large part of his independent fortune, which makes Lester's need for a share in his father's estate more pressing, finally turns the balance against Jennie—though it is she who urges him to go.

At a subsequent meeting he tries to explain his feelings:

> "I was just as happy with you as I ever will be. It isn't myself that's important in this transaction apparently; the individual doesn't count much in the situation . . . All of us are more or less pawns. We're moved about like chessmen by circumstances over which we have no control. . . .

> "After all, life is more or less of a farce," he went on a little bitterly. "It's a silly show. The best we can do is to hold our personality intact. It doesn't appear that integrity has much to do with it." [4]

Stricken with a fatal illness, he calls her to his death bed, where he tells her,

> "I haven't been satisfied with the way we parted. It wasn't the right thing, after all. I haven't been any happier. I'm sorry. I wish now for my own peace of mind, that I hadn't done it. . . . It wasn't right. The thing wasn't worked out right from the start; but that wasn't your fault. I'm sorry. I wanted to tell you that. I'm glad I'm here to do it."

The story ends with Jennie at the station for a last glimpse of the coffin. Her child has died, Lester is gone, she is destitute.

A novel with a "kept woman" for its central figure would be somewhat unusual, but when that kept woman is presented as good and admirable, as possessing positive virtues which raise her quite above the general run of socially minded people, we recognize a novel in which conventional values are challenged, in which an unusual approach is taken to the problem of man in society.

In Jennie's world good intention and beauty of character are not necessarily rewarded. Nor is what is conventionally called evil punished. Hence standard ethics are discredited because they do not represent a realistic interpretation of social relations. They do not constitute the genuine forces which make for social cohesion and regulate the conduct of civilized men. This assumption is fundamental in *Jennie Gerhardt.* As the hero says, "The best we can do is to hold our personality intact." Jennie's goodness is valued more highly than the society which destroys her chance for happiness. Dreiser does not show that there may be extenuating circumstances to pardon the sinfulness of the "fallen woman." He denies that she is sinful; he deplores the moral codes which, failing to restrain her first slip, inflict a consciousness of guilt upon her ever after; he considers her good and beautiful, and the reader is led to conclude that Lester Kane was foolish (or very unlucky) not to have married her. These conclusions suggest that Dreiser believes in a spiritual truth which exists above the flux and error of actuality. He does not account for it, but he affirms its presence in Jennie and he deplores through his novel the social conditions which blight its growth and free expression.

But the pathos of Jennie's life is the outstanding fact of the novel, the fact upon which may depend any ideas that the reader may gather. As a work of art *Jennie Gerhardt* is highly successful; the ideas upon which it is based serve first of all to create a certain aesthetic effect and do not obtrude themselves in the way of that effect. It is too bad that Jennie should suffer, and the system is to be deplored for making her suffer, but that is not tantamount to saying that the institution of marriage, for example, should be rejected. It would indeed detract from the pathos of Jennie's situation if the author were crusading for change. The conditions which crush her must, for the purpose of the novel, be regarded as unchangeable.

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[4] This passage is notable as the most explicit statement of belief in the novel. It comes from Lester, but it represents Dreiser's own attitude because it is virtually the thesis of his novel.

III

In the second stage of his development Dreiser added the idea of the superman to the two main ideas which I have described. When one had found that life was meaningless and morals absurdly inadequate, the next step was to conclude that the only good lay in exercising one's will to power. The philosophy of the superman was conveniently available to enable Dreiser to take this step; and he wrote four novels about the activities of supermen in the modern business world. Nietzsche's philosophy saw in the superman the only hope for the betterment of mankind. Dreiser may have known this aspect of Nietzsche's thought, he may even have begun *The Financier* with the intention of demonstrating some such idea, but his study of the activities of one of the Robber Barons of the late nineteenth century seems finally to have drawn him away from the notion that the financial superman was an indispensable agent in the development of a capitalistic society.

Dreiser's "Trilogy of Desire," composed of *The Financier* (1912), *The Titan* (1914), and *The Stoic* (1947), represents his efforts to set forth the life of a modern financial superman. Although written from the point of view of the superman and begun as a celebration rather than an indictment of him, these novels virtually accomplished Jack London's avowed but unfulfilled purpose in writing the *Sea Wolf*—to show that "the superman cannot be successful in modern life . . . , he acts like an irritant in the social body." This cannot be called Dreiser's purpose, however, for he never arrived at that degree of conviction which would permit him to organize a portion of the social scene and write about it as if he had thought his way through to a final conclusion about its meaning. It is the planlessness and inconclusiveness of life that interested Dreiser. On the other hand, nearly all critics have ceased accusing him of being merely a patient recorder who copied his books tediously from newspaper records.

The organizing hand of the artist is always present, but its purpose is not to reduce the complexity of life to a prettily simplified pattern that answers all one's questions about cause and effect, design and purpose.

The Financier and *The Titan* contain perhaps the greatest mass of documentation to be found in any American novels in the naturalistic tradition. They are records of an epoch of American life. The career of Charles T. Yerkes, traction magnate of Philadelphia and Chicago, supplied Dreiser with the materials for his two books. Yerkes is transformed into Frank Algernon Cowperwood, and the novels record his economic and amorous affairs in minutest detail. *The Financier* takes Cowperwood from boyhood up to the panic of 1873. A "superman" devoid of ethical restraints, he goes from business to business, gaining control of the Philadelphia street-railway network, and becoming involved with political graft. He becomes a millionaire and is laying plans to make a billion when the Chicago fire in 1871 causes a panic which wipes out his fortune. Because he seduced the daughter of the political boss, he is at this time abandoned by those in control and made a scapegoat for an indignant populace. After thirteen months in prison he is pardoned just in time to regain his fortune by selling short in the panic of 1873. Here ends *The Financier*.

The Titan is longer and more detailed. It tells how Cowperwood moves to Chicago and, through bribes and cleverness, gains a number of franchises for the distribution of suburban gas. After this coup he launches into a long fight to gain control of all the Chicago street railways. The facts are all there, vividly realized and brought to life. And since the affairs of Cowperwood are part and parcel of this vast economic complex, the recording of its intricacies is documentation in the closest naturalistic tradition. It is setting, condition, and material for the novel; none of it is extraneous, none gratuitous, because it is all a part of Cowperwood's career.

It has been shown in the discussion of both *Sister Carrie* and *Jennie Gerhardt* that Dreiser's determinism is determinism *after the fact*. That is, he does not pretend to go behind an act of so-called will and show all the conditions and pressures of which it is composed. In *The Financier* and *The Titan* there is the same attitude toward man and society, but the situation is greatly altered by a change in one of the factors of the problem. The factor of course is Frank Algernon Cowperwood. Instead of being relatively weak like Carrie, Hurstwood, Jennie, and Lester Kane, Cowperwood is endowed with tremendous energy and ability. He is born to conquer, and he knows it. Toward the end of *The Titan* he is still strong:

> he seemed a kind of superman, and yet also a bad boy—handsome, powerful, hopeful . . . impelled by some blazing internal force which harried him on and on.

He is the apotheosis of individualism, the man who moves the mass, which "only moves forward because of the services of the exceptional individual." He answers to the Nietzschean wish "that the significant individual will always appear and will always do what his instincts tell him to do."

At the end of *The Financier* Cowperwood has asserted himself stupendously, made and lost a great fortune, complicated the life of every banker and politician in Philadelphia, and yet, like Jennie and Lester Kane and Hurstwood, has been swept back and forth by environing forces more powerful than even his intelligence and resolution. Being a larger figure, he moves in a more elaborate complex of forces; but the forces elude his foresight and generalship and temporarily strip him of freedom and fortune.

At the end of the great struggle related in *The Titan*, when Cowperwood is temporarily defeated by the enmity his power has evoked, Dreiser expatiates upon the spectacle of his superman's career:

> Rushing like a great comet to the zenith, his path a blazing trail, Cowperwood did for the hour illuminate the terrors and wonders of individuality. But for him also the eternal equation—the pathos of the discovery that even giants are but pygmies, and that an ultimate balance must be struck. Of the strange, tortured, terrified reflection of those who, caught in his wake, were swept from the normal and the commonplace, what shall we say? Legislators by the hundreds were hounded from politics into their graves; a half-hundred aldermen of various councils who were driven grumbling or whining into the limbo of the dull, the useless and the commonplace.

These sentences repeat the philosophy outlined earlier in connection with *Sister Carrie* and *Jennie Gerhardt*. The action of the books involves the same wondering uncertainty, the same vision of life as purposeless and unpredictable, the same denial of ethical codes, the same recognition of external pressures which determine the courses of our lives. What distinguishes *The Financier* and *The Titan* from the two previous novels is, as we have seen, the different weight given in them to the human factor in Dreiser's equation of change. Cowperwood is a greater force than Dreiser's earlier characters, but his position in the cosmos is essentially the same.

In conclusion we may consider the ethical import of these books. Hearing about them, one's reaction is that Dreiser must have composed them as an indictment of the business methods of the Robber Barons—to show that they were social menaces who should have been extirpated. Doubtless some such conclusion comes to the reader after he has finished the novels; but so long as he is reading them Cowperwood is the hero. His morals may not be held up as exemplary for American society, but his intelligence and energy make him the center of attention and concern. Further than this, Dreiser is frequently at pains to cast doubt upon the judgments which condemn Cowperwood. Early in *The Financier*, young Cowperwood gets his first lesson in the law of tooth and fang by watching a lobster devour a squid that was placed in a tank with him in a store window. The same novel ends with a parable about the Black Grouper, a fish which survives by virtue of its ability to change color and so deceive enemy and prey alike. We are asked,

> What would you say was the intention of the overruling, intelligent constructive force which gives to Mycteroperca this ability? To fit it to be truthful? To permit it to present an unvarying appearance which all honest, life-seeking fish may know? Or would you say that sublety, chicanery, trickery, were here at work? . . . The indictment is fair.
>
> Would you say, in the face of this, that a beatific, beneficent, creative overruling power never wills that which is either tricky or deceptive?

The conclusion is that Christian ethics are illusory, that people should not be blamed for disobeying a code which, if followed, would render them unfit to survive.

It does not follow from this denial of conventional ethics that a Cowperwood is a boon to society. He may "move the mass," but Dreiser's own story shows that he does not move it to any good end. There is no paradox here. The point is that Dreiser is thinking in terms of the individual without sufficiently considering his social function. He is condemning "Divine Law" without apparently realizing that it often corresponds to natural law. Cowperwood cannot reasonably be condemned to hell-fire for following his natural bent, and it is natural for him to strive for power; but his social value is another matter. Dreiser denies a beneficent guiding Purpose, and so removes moral blame; but he does not investigate the social function of Cowperwood. If he did, he would unquestionably recognize society's need to restrain such individuals. And he has done so since then.

The "Genius" (1915) is cut from the same block as *The Financier* and *The Titan*. Both in form and thesis it resembles those novels so closely that an extended analysis of it is unnecessary. Eugene Witla, the hero of *The "Genius,"* is a superman like Cowperwood. He is an artist rather than a financier, but otherwise he is much the same sort of person. Like Cowperwood, again, he is set loose in the turbulence of modern life and permitted to exercise his superior cunning and resourcefulness untrammeled by moral restraints or inhibiting consideration for others. Like Cowperwood he has his successes and his failures, the forces which thwart his intentions frequently being the combination of weaker people who unite in defiance of his superman self-assertion. And again, Witla's amours occupy a large portion of the story, represent the superabundance of his artistic "genius," and are responsible for several of his misfortunes. Like *The Financier* and *The Titan, The "Genius"* consists of a loosely connected sequence of events related by chronology and by the fact that Eugene Witla participates in them all. The book, furthermore, ends upon a note of wonder and uncertainty which we have found to be characteristic of Dreiser's attitude of life at this stage. And finally, the superman hero is the center of reference and attention throughout the story. His effect upon society is not considered, for Dreiser is still brooding over the place of the individual in his meaningless cosmos. *The "Genius"* is probably also the most personal of Dreiser's books. Revelation replaces theory to a considerable degree.

I V

THE THIRD STAGE in Dreiser's naturalism is marked by his conversion to socialism. Here the ideas that signalized his first stage remain, but instead of advocating individual anarchy, as he tended to do under the aegis of Nietzsche, he has come to believe that something can be accomplished toward the amelioration of social evils if men will unite in a concerted attack upon those evils. *An American Tragedy* (1925) is founded upon this point of view, although we must remember that this, like Dreiser's other novels, is first of all a human story.

An American Tragedy is the story of how Clyde Griffiths goes from singing hymns on the streets of Kansas City, to working as a bellhop in Chicago, to prospering in the collar factory of his wealthy uncle, and, just as he has been taken up by a rich and fascinating society girl, to discovering that his factory girl-friend is pregnant. In desperation, after weeks of torturing worry, he plans to take her boating in the country and "accidentally" drown her. At the final moment he lacks courage to overturn the boat, but Chance—or the situation produced by the two personalities in their particular relation—completes the design in another way:

seeing his despairing and horrified expression, Roberta comes toward him in the boat. He strikes out desperately to fend her off and unintentionally hits her with a camera. The boat capsizes, striking Roberta as she falls into the water, and Clyde refrains from saving her.

The rest of the story is devoted to the apprehension, trial, conviction, and execution of Clyde for the murder of Roberta. As the passage referred to above indicates, Clyde himself is not perfectly sure whether or not he is guilty. Before Roberta arose and came toward him in the rowboat, he had certainly decided that he would not commit the crime he had planned. On the other hand, he instituted the expedition with murder in his heart—a fact which exerted great influence upon the final decision of the jury. The prosecution brings dozens of witnesses and traces Clyde's movements minutely. Clyde's only defense is his last-minute change of heart, for which there is no evidence and which is easily counterbalanced by the absolute proof of his murderous intentions.

From an objective point of view one can hardly blame Clyde for an action in which he was largely a weak and helpless participant. Clyde did not wilfully produce the dilemma which called forth his attempt to resolve it. His craving for wealth and social position can be understood—like his complementary lack of ethical standards—in the light of his upbringing. His weakness is contemptible to some readers, but Dreiser certainly does not condemn it. Clyde has a certain power of choice, to be sure, which Dreiser does not reduce to its ultimate chemical constituents as the first naïve naturalists thought they might finally be able to do; but that power of choice, though accepted as a factor in the problem, is shown to be conditioned by the many forces among which it exists.

In *An American Tragedy*, however, there is a difference of emphasis which is intimately associated with the structure of the novel. To begin with, Clyde is doubtless the weakest of Dreiser's heroes; he has least of the inexplicable inner drive which makes a commanding personality. He begins, further, with a pitifully meager background and narrow view of life. He is no Cowperwood or Witla superman—he has not even the charm of Carrie or Jennie. And as the novel proceeds there is so careful an attention to detail and so complete a delineation of the various experiences which add to Clyde's miserable store of ideas and ideals that the reader seems to be gaining a full insight into the forces which account for the nature of Clyde's personality. It is because of the simplicity of Clyde's character and the narrowness of his initial outlook that Dreiser is able to go so far behind the phenomenon of his "will" and explain its constituents.

This greater penetration of character goes hand in hand with a considerable difference in structure; for whereas the very essence and meaning of the earlier novels is to be found in the confused and inconclusive buffeting that makes up the lives of Carrie, Jennie, or even Cowperwood, the story of Clyde Griffiths takes its integrated and undeviating way through murder, arrest, trial, and execution. This unity is characteristic of tragedy, which can occur even in a naturalist's world and give form (and even some dignity) to what would otherwise be a dreary and meaningless life.

Although this difference in structure might be attributed merely to its content, there is, furthermore, a difference between the philosophy of the *American Tragedy* and the earlier novels which justifies the assertion that it marks a third distinct stage in Dreiser's naturalism. In *The Financier*, *The Titan*, and *The "Genius"* Dreiser saw life through the eyes of a superman, to whom it appeared as a welter of forces among which he must try somehow to work out his individual salvation. The damage to society in the career of a Cowperwood may be discovered in the books; but the purpose of those books is not to dwell upon the social evil of his career. Similarly, Eugene Witla's career is seen as an individual's struggle, without particular social implications. In Clyde Griffiths' progress, on the contrary, social implications abound. Dreiser had been converted to socialism since writing *The "Genius"*; his American tragedy is a tragedy brought about by the society in which we live. That society is responsible, as the immediate cause, for Clyde's actions. This social consciousness marks the third stage of Dreiser's naturalism. This is not to say that *An American Tragedy* is an indictment of our social order. It is first of all a work of art, the tragedy of Clyde Griffiths, a picture of a life that is tragic because the protagonist is at once responsible (as any human being feels another to be) and helpless (as the philosopher views events). . . . Clyde's tragedy is a tragedy that depends upon the American social system. It shows the unfortunate effects of that system more, for example, than did the defeat of Cowperwood at the end of *The Titan*. In the latter instance a "superman" was battling the opposition aroused by his will to power. In Clyde's case the whole of the American social order, in its normal activity, is brought into the picture.

Robert Frost

Robert Frost: Profane Optimist

WILLIAM VAN O'CONNOR

THE LITTLE CONTROVERSY generated by J. Donald Adams in the *New York Times* some time ago suggests that there is a good deal of misunderstanding about the nature of Robert Frost's poetry. Mr. Trilling, at a dinner honoring Mr. Frost, had observed that there is a considerable element of terror in Frost's poetry, as indeed there is. Mr. Adams protested, saying that Mr. Trilling was looking at Frost from out of the Freudian woods, and most of the letter writers who got into the controversy agreed with Mr. Adams. The common image of Mr. Frost is as a countryman, also a poet, who has gained his wisdom from nature; he is witty, shrewd, and serene. Commonly too he is said to be unlike most modern poets and fiction writers in that he is an optimist

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who also says clearly what he means. In other words, Frost is supposed to run against the drift of modern poetry. The extent to which these assumptions about Frost are true, untrue, or half true is the subject of this enquiry.

One way of getting at Robert Frost's general view of things is to compare "The Wood-Pile" with the passage in Herman Melville's *Israel Potter* which seems to have suggested it. Out for a walk on a cold winter's day, the poet comes upon a cord of maple, cut years earlier and forgotten. He describes the occasion and then adds:

I thought that only
Someone who lived in turning to fresh tasks
Could so forget his handiwork on which
He spent himself, the labor of his ax,
And leave it there far from a useful fireplace
To warm the frozen swamp as best it could
With the slow smokeless burning of decay.

Frost does not make the point that all of man's purposes go awry or that everything he builds goes back into nature. Of course, he might say, intentions do go awry and human creations do decay, but the sensible thing to do is to accept what we cannot do anything to change.

Melville's Israel Potter, a forgotten hero of the Battle of Bunker Hill, returns as an old man to the site of his boyhood home. Only a few scattered bits of moss-covered masonry remain, and the family, its name forgotten, has disappeared. Israel does find one sign from these earlier years:

> Ere long, on the mountain side, he passed into an ancient natural wood, which seemed some way familiar, and midway in it, paused to contemplate a strange mouldy pile, resting at one end against a sturdy beech. Though wherever touched by his staff, however lightly, this pile would crumble, yet here and there, even in powder, it preserved the exact look, each irregularly defined line, of what it has originally been—namely a half-cord of stout hemlock (one of the woods least affected by exposure to the air), in a foregoing generation chopped and stacked up on the spot, against sledging time, but, as sometimes happens in such cases, by subsequent oversight, abandoned to oblivious decay—type now, as it stood there, of forever arrested intentions, and a long life still rotting in early mishap.
>
> "Do I dream?" mused the bewildered old man, "or what is this vision that comes to me of a cold, cloudy morning, long, long ago, and I heaving yon elbowed log against the beech, then a sapling? Nay, nay, I cannot be so old."

The unused woodpile and its slow decay were to Melville a symbol of arrested intentions, of hopes dashed and of human frustration. He creates a romantic irony; great expectations collapse. Frost's irony works within a smaller orbit, as for example, the little joke about warming the outdoors. Though, of course, Frost realizes that his implicit advice that we reduce the cosmos to the realm of the everyday carries its own ironic overtones.

"The Wood-Pile" is from *North of Boston*, Frost's second book, but only a few poems in the first book, *A Boy's Will*, are very different in tone. "My November Guest" is the sort of nature poetry that William Cullen Bryant had written:

Her pleasure will not let me stay.
   She talks and I am fain to list:
She's glad the birds are gone away,
She's glad her simple worsted grey
   Is silver now with clinging mist.

"Into My Own," "Ghost House," and "Love and a Question" might have been written by Wilfred Gibson, Lascelles Abercrombie or Edward Thomas, the Georgian poets with whom Frost associated during his several years' stay in England, but most of the poems in the first book, in theme if not always in manner, are pushing in the direction of "The Wood-Pile." "Storm Fear" describes a New England winter and says we must "save ourselves unaided." "Vantage Point" defines the circumference of man's world: houses on the opposite hill, cattle grazing, a few trees, a cemetery, the earth under his feet. And "The Demiurge's Laugh" presents Frost's view of what we can expect if we search in science or in metaphysics for ultimate answers:

It was far in the sameness of the wood;
   I was running with joy on the Demon's trail,
Though I knew what I hunted was no true god.
   It was just as the light was beginning to fail
That I suddenly heard—all I needed to hear:
It has lasted me many and many a year.

The sound was behind me instead of before,
   A sleepy sound, but mocking half,
As of one who utterly couldn't care.
   The Demon arose from his wallow to laugh,
Brushing the dirt from his eye as he went;
And well I knew what the Demon meant.

I shall not forget how his laugh rang out.
  I felt as a fool to have been so caught,
And checked my steps to make pretence
  It was something among the leaves I sought
(Though doubtful whether he stayed to see).
Thereafter I sat me against a tree.

Frost implies in "Reluctance," a Keatsian-sounding poem, that he casts his lot with reason, but by reason he means common sense, the plain mother-wit that can take us through a day and should tell us not to expect too much.

How unlike certain of his New England predecessors Frost is can be suggested by comparing him with Bryant or Ralph Waldo Emerson. For example, a passage from "To a Waterfowl":

  All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
  Though the dark night is near.

. . . . .

  He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
  Will lead my steps aright.

Or this passage from Emerson's "Woodnotes":

The moss upon the forest bark
Was pole-star when the night was dark;
The purple berries in the wood
Supplied me necessary food;
For Nature ever faithful is
To such as trust her faithfulness.

Nature's intelligence, the ethical universe common to many nineteenth-century poets, is not to be found in Frost. "Stars," despite its idiom, presents the neutral universe of Stephen Crane or Ernest Hemingway:

How countlessly they congregate
  O'er our tumultuous snow,
Which flows in shapes as tall as trees
  When wintry winds do blow!—

As if with keenness for our fate,
  Our faltering few steps on

To white rest, and a place of rest
  Invisible at dawn,—

And yet with neither love nor hate,
  Those stars like some snow-white
Minerva's snow-white marble eyes
  Without the gift of sight.

Frost, commonly held to be in the line of nineteenth-century New England poetry, does not continue the tradition of romantic optimism.

At least three poems in his first volume are in a voice clearly that of the poet of the later books, and they investigate themes that will continue to hold his attention. "Mowing" advises us not to romanticize the world, but to find our pleasure in work and in commonplace experiences. If we idealize, as we must and should, it should be in relation to what we know to be so, to be a fact: "The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows." And the manner of the poem, employing fourteen syllables to a line and rather irregular rhyme, is relaxed and conversational. "The Tuft of Flowers" is concerned with man's aloneness and his togetherness, and with one of the ways—the common experience of beauty—of assuaging our sense of loneliness. And "The Pasture" is about companionship in simple circumstances:

I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's so young
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
I shan't be gone long.—You come too.

The Frost of *A Boy's Will*, despite the occasional reliance on a nineteenth-century idiom and a Georgian manner, is the essential Frost. This is not to say that the volume displays Frost's power at its best. Perhaps his achievement is most easily seen in looking into later treatments of these themes and examining, structurally, and rhetorically, the ways in which they are developed.

North of Boston took Frost deeply into his New England subject matter, and made clearer what were to be his most typical structures. Ignoring the regional characteristics for the moment, we may consider questions of structure. "Good Hours," seemingly only a description of a walk on a cold winter's evening, is a poem about one's inability to return to the habits and associations of former years:

I had for my winter evening walk—
No one at all with whom to talk,
But I had the cottages in a row
Up to their shining eyes in snow.

And I thought I had the folk within:
I had the sound of a violin;
I had a glimpse through curtain laces
Of youthful forms and youthful faces.

I had such company outward bound.
I went till there were no cottages found.
I turned and repented, but coming back
I saw no window but that was black.

Over the snow my creaking feet
Disturbed the slumbering village street
Like profanation, by your leave,
At ten o'clock of a winter eve.

The trip through life is a quick one, friends die or go away, and the joys once known cannot be re-experienced. The phrase "by your leave" provides the Frostian tone: that's the way things are but let us not worry the matter until we are morbid. "Good Hours," like many poems in later books ("The Runaway," "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," or "The Bear") is a self-contained symbol.

Some of the dramatic narratives are self-contained situations, with the reader being free to read in as much in the way of inference as he believes the poem will bear. (Like Browning, Frost cuts into the middle, *in medias res*, of his narratives, but, unlike Browning, Frost usually allows his second character more of a role than that of listener.) In "Mending Wall," for example, there are, if one wishes to press the implications, arguments for a conservative view of traditional modes of action and on the other hand arguments against rigidity of mind and unwillingness to question old habits. In "Home Burial" whose view, if either, is exclusively the right one? the man who rids himself of grief by going on with his daily jobs, even burying their dead child himself, or the woman who wants grief carried openly? The arguments, his and hers, are presented, but the poet does not take sides.

There are also poems, as in "The Wood-Pile," wherein a situation is described or a symbol presented, in which the poet furnishes an explication, saying this view or another is thereby suggested to him. To take an example from a later book, *A Further Range*, there is the fine poem "Unharvested":

A scent of ripeness from over a wall.
And come to leave the routine road
And look for what had made me stall,
There sure enough was an apple tree

That had eased itself of its summer load,
And of all but its trivial foliage free,
Now breathed as light as a lady's fan.
For there there had been an apple fall
As complete as the apple had given man.
The ground was one circle of solid red.

May something go always unharvested!
May much stay out of our stated plan,
Apples or something forgotten and left,
So smelling their sweetness would be no theft.

Perhaps most often a poem is a mixture of metaphor, explication, sly observations, and whimsical asides, as in "October," from the first volume:

O hushed October morning mild,
Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;
To-morrow's wind, if it be wild,
Should waste them all.
The crows above the forest call;
To-morrow they may form and go.
O hushed October morning mild,
Begin the hours of this day slow.
Make the day seem to us less brief.
Hearts not averse to being beguiled,
Beguile us in the way you know.
Release one leaf at break of day;
At noon release another leaf;
One from our trees, one far away.
Retard the sun with gentle mist;
Enchant the land with amethyst.
Slow, slow!
For the grapes' sake, if they were all,
Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,
Whose clustered fruit must else be lost—
For the grapes' sake along the wall.

Sometimes, as one would expect, the mixture of metaphor and observation does not quite come off. An observation is needed because the metaphor does not fully carry the meaning. A conspicuous example of this is in Frost's well known "Birches," from *Mountain Interval*, which seems *deliberately* poetic and *deliberately* significant. Deliberateness is particularly disturbing in a Frost poem because so much depends on the casual surface, the unsaid, the sly suggestion. When the theme has to be spelled out, the characteristic charm tends to evaporate.

This latter point is also involved in the rhetoric of a Frost poem. Poetry, after all, is the language of artifice, and there is artifice behind the seeming naturalness, as in the opening lines of "Blueberries":

> "You ought to have seen what I saw on my way
> To the village, through Patterson's pasture to-day:
> Blueberries as big as the end of your thumb,
> Real sky-blue, and heavy, and ready to drum
> In the cavernous pail of the first one to come!
> And all ripe together, not one of them green
> And some of them ripe! You ought to have seen!"

In this passage in "The Death of the Hired Man," there is the strong simple dignity of

> Among the harp-like morning-glory strings,
> Taut with the dew from garden bed to eaves,
> As if she played unheard some tenderness
> That wrought on him beside her in the night.

One goes from ordinary conversation into a language expressed in a slightly higher register. The passage gives a sense of sudden elevation, and the effect carries over into more prosaic lines that follow. All poetry needs language that is apart from the ordinary, and the poet who manages to see and isolate special qualities in the ordinary and the slightly above ordinary is pursuing a difficult course. Occasionally he will over-reach himself, as Frost does when he has Warren's wife say:

> "He may not speak of it, and then he may.
> I'll sit and see if that small sailing cloud
> Will hit or miss the moon."
> It hit the moon.

In another poet's work, the passage might seem rather ineffectual rhetoric —in Frost's poem it seems deliberate poeticizing. And in its context her epigram, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in," seems forced, its having become a famous quotation notwithstanding. Again, in "Home Burial" the conversation is in vigorous language, spare and in focus against its subject matter. In the middle of it, however, one suddenly hears the wife use language more appropriate to a melodrama:

"I saw you from that very window there,
Making the gravel leap and leap in air,
Leap up, like that, like that, and land so lightly
And roll back down the mound beside the hole."

The description is not in the idiom suitable to her sort of grief or to her other language. Frost does have a genius for catching the quality of livingness and naturalness in ordinary daily affairs. But the ambience allowed thereby is severely limited. When he writes a passage that does not respect these restrictions there is a jarring effect, the intrusion of artificial lines.

Frost is, of course, the poet of New England, as Faulkner is the novelist of Mississippi, or Mark Twain was the voice of Missouri and the Mississippi valley. *North of Boston* and *New Hampshire* are more explicitly of New England probably than any of the other volumes. Despite its title, *Mountain Interval* is not especially regional. But a parochially New England poem is likely to turn up in any of the volumes, and attitudes commonly attributed to New England are everywhere evident. "Two Tramps in Mud Time," for example, one of his most explicitly regional poems, was published in *A Further Range*. The situation of the poem is commented on in such a way that the regional significances loom large. A New England spring is described and wryly enjoyed. The lumberjacks, outside the norms of respectability, are called tramps. The poet speaks for the spirit of individualism, self-control, and pride in workmanship, all of which are associated with the puritan heritage. "Two Tramps in Mud Time" also speaks in favor of a peculiar Frostian theme, the wisdom in doing well and in enjoying what we are obligated to do, that is, to make one's job or profession an art, not a burden to be endured for financial rewards.

Some of the images of New England which Frost presents can hardly be called flattering. Frost's New England is not, as already suggested, the prosperous, leather-bound culture one feels in Bryant, Emerson, Holmes, or Whittier. They saw New England as growing in wealth and wisdom, and their poetry, like their parlor furniture, suggested contentment and trust in the future. A New England port would be a new Rhodes or Carthage. Neither Hawthorne nor Melville was quite so committed to his contemporaries' sense of New England; they looked sharply at the effects on personality of a too straitened morality or at the effects on human optimism of farms that refused to prosper on the rock-strewn sides of mountains. Frost's poetry fulfills the full weight of their suspicions—but unlike his own contemporary, E. A. Robinson, Frost has refused to despair or even to be depressed by a twentieth-century New England that is considerably different from what the poets of her renaissance foresaw.

In *Israel Potter* Melville mentions the farms that refused to stay put on the mountains and the families that, hoping for better fortune, had disappeared westward. A few figures from a U. S. census report provide a good gloss on the rural world of Frost's poetry: Of the farm homes that existed in Massachusetts in 1890, eighteen per cent had been abandoned by 1930, in Vermont twenty-seven per cent, and in New Hampshire forty-five per cent. "The Birthplace," from *West-Running Brook*, is about the houses that did not stay on the mountain:

> Here further up the mountain slope
> Than there was ever any hope,
> My father built, enclosed a spring,
> Strung chains of wall round everything,
> Subdued the growth of earth to grass,
> And brought our various lives to pass.
> A dozen girls and boys we were.
> The mountain seemed to like the stir,
> And made of us a little while—
> With always something in her smile.
> Today she wouldn't know our name.
> (No girl's, of course, has stayed the same.)
> The mountain pushed us off her knees.
> And now her lap is full of trees.

"A Fountain, a Bottle, a Donkey's Ears and Some Books," from *New Hampshire*, is even more explicit. Two young men visit the ruined and abandoned house of a nineteenth-century poetess, and in the attic they find volumes of her poems. Nature presses in on and has almost obliterated an older world and, with it, the culture that breathed security and trust in the future. And in "The Census Taker" there is a description of the census taker working in an area that is almost abandoned: The conclusion is

> The melancholy of having to count souls
> Where they grow fewer and fewer every year
> Is extreme where they shrink to none at all.
> It must be I want life to go on living.

Frost presents, then a sense of rural New England in decay. A tough, resisting spirit opposes the decay, sometimes the poet himself and sometimes a symbolic New England farmer, but the decay is there, in physical and mental manifestations.

Several poems in *North of Boston* are concerned with lives that have been warped to the point of eccentricity, neurosis or even madness. "The Housekeeper," presented in dialogue, is about this situation: Estelle, the housekeeper, has become the common-law wife of a farmer named John. The mother of Estelle, who relates the story to a neighbor, says that her daughter has brooded over his refusal to marry her—and to even the score with him has gone off and married someone she did not really want to marry. John had no reason for not marrying her, other than human perversity. The mother, as her character is disclosed in her conversation, has become quite fatalistic about sheer perversity in conduct. "The Fear" has as its central subject a situation not too dissimilar from that in "The Housekeeper," it being about a woman who has gone off with someone not her husband and who lives in terrible fear of his finding her. "A Servant to Servant" is the story of a woman who, inheriting a streak of insanity from her father's family, has such a difficult life as a farmer's wife that she is frequently near the edge of insanity and was once committed to the state asylum. She believes the insane should be in an asylum and not at home. Her reason is that her insane uncle, though before her birth, had been kept caged in an upper room and her mother, as a young bride, had had to listen at night to his mad and obscene screams. The woman has no hope that her own life will ever be any easier. *Mountain Interval* provides at least two further instances of strangeness; in the egotistical minister of a strange sect whose rejection by the community forces him to bizarre conduct ("Snow"), and lyrics devoted to a woman whom loneliness drives insane ("The Hill Wife").

A word also on the culture of New England as it appears in one poem, "A Hundred Collars," from *North of Boston*. Doctor Magoon, a university professor and "great scholar," returns occasionally to the small town of his boyhood, but there is no longer an easy relationship between the townspeople and himself. Unable to get a train through to his destination one night, he finds himself in Woodsville, where he is obliged to share a room with a traveling salesman or, rather, agent for a weekly newspaper. There is no genuine communication between the two men—and the point of the poem is that there is no interrelationship between the official or "high" culture, which in Doctor Magoon seems pretty desiccated, and the everyday life of the people. And there is no awareness in the people of their forebears, who pursued culture avidly and had such great hopes for the future.

On the other hand, there are many poems in which Frost acknowledges a wiry sort of strength in his rural folk. One of the more explicit characterizations of the New England Yankee is "Brown's Descent," from *Mountain Interval*, a humorously fantastic account of Farmer Brown, whose house and barns were high on a mountain. One evening in winter, when the ground was cased hard in snow, he was caught in a mighty wind which sent him kiting and sliding, lantern in hand, all the way down the mountain. At the bottom of his descent he is two miles from home, straight up the mountainside. Looking at him, Frost then comments on Brown as Yankee stock:

> Yankees are what they always were.
> Don't think Brown ever gave up hope
> Of getting home again because
> He couldn't climb that slippery slope;
>
> Or even thought of standing there
> Until the January thaw
> Should take the polish off the crust.
> He bowed with grace to natural law,
>
> And then went round it on his feet,
> After the manner of our stock;
> Not much concerned for those to whom,
> At that particular time o'clock,
>
> It must have looked as if the course
> He steered was really straight away
> From that which he was headed for—
> Not much concerned for them, I say;
>
> No more so than became a man—
> *And* politician at odd seasons.
> I've kept Brown standing in the cold
> While I invested him with reasons;
>
> But now he snapped his eyes three times;
> Then shook his lantern, saying, 'Ile's
> 'Bout out!' and took the long way home
> By road, a matter of several miles.

This rural stock, as it appears in Frost's poetry at least, is a little queer (and sometimes worse than that), but still hardy, resisting both the weather and economic difficulties.

To take a few poems in somewhat random fashion. "The Code," from *North of Boston*, explains how a hired man buried his employer under a load of hay because the latter was "bulling" him, that is, making remarks about working harder and faster. A self-respecting farm hand, who knows he is working conscientiously, will not accept such treatment, and, in this poem, the farmer himself, though angry, accepts his being buried as well deserved. His interlocutor asks the farm hand, "Did he discharge you?" "Discharge me? No! He knew I did just right." The title poem in *New Hampshire* is a fairly amusing essay on a people who having little or nothing to sell need not soil themselves with commerce. "The Axe Helve" also develops the theme of anticommercialism, with one Baptiste, of French or French-Canadian stock, explaining that machine-made axe helves are dangerous to use, that only hickory should be used, and so on. "Paul's Wife," a mock-heroic Bunyan tale, gives a New England twist to the fabulous lumberjack. Frost gives him an exaggerated sense of privacy and personal possession, making him, in the language of the region, "a terrible possessor."

The philosophical and political conservatism evident in Frost, especially in the later volumes, *West-Running Brook* and *A Further Range*, also has a New England coloring. The traditional opposition to romantic and sentimental humanitarianism is evident, sometimes all too evident. The title poem of the former book presents two lovers studying the backward movement in a stream. Symbolically the westward running brook means westward expansionism, money making, progress, and democratic humanitarianism. In the rapids the water flows backward, against the current—and the lovers approve of those who go against the current of their times. "Build Soil" is a statement in favor of laissez-faire economics, and "Departmental" compares a socialistic society to an ant hill. It may be going too far to say that New England accounts for Frost's politics, but at least the politics are not in forthright contradiction to the region. Probably rural New England is closer in spirit to the nineteenth century than is any other section in the United States. Again, Frost has chosen to exclude from his poetry even what there is of urbanism, industrialism, and finance capital in his region. Therefore his doctrine of individualism, seeming to exist in a nineteenth-century world, has an air of being purer in virtue than, in a twentieth-century world, it really is. In certain contexts Frost's views are "reactionary," but in others they are vigorously healthy and affirmative. An instance of the latter is to be found in "Good-bye and Keep Cold," from *New Hampshire*, an address to a young orchard that will have to endure the harsh winter, but having endured it will be stronger. The concluding lines—

> I wish I could promise to lie in the night
> And think of an orchard's arboreal plight
> When slowly (and nobody comes with a light)
> Its heart sinks lower under the sod.
> But something has to be left to God.

Finally all of us are, and should be, on our own.

A few poems in the Frost canon deal directly, or almost directly, with the subject of poetry itself. An examination of them makes it possible to recapitulate a few of Frost's favorite themes and to see in what way the themes influence the poetry itself. There is, for example, a passage in "New Hampshire" in which Frost criticizes the effort to withdraw from nature into intellect. Frost says he knew a man whose fear of nature took the form of hating trees—

> The only decent tree had been to mill
> And educated into boards, he said.

The Frost doctrine, which appears in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," "After Apple Picking," and elsewhere, is that man is half in nature and half out. He feels the pull of nature in instinct and in the desire to participate in the processes of nature—and on the other side he feels the pull toward reason, duty, idealization. He is neither pure animal nor pure mind, and it is as grievous an error to live by mind alone as by instinct alone. In "New Hampshire" he is being critical of those who attempt to live outside of nature, which Frost calls "Matthew Arnoldism." The man afraid of trees

> knew too well for any earthly use
> The line where man leaves off and nature starts,
> And never over-stepped it save in dreams.

In "To Earthward," also in *New Hampshire*, Frost recalls that as a young man he viewed the world through the eyes of an aesthete—

> The petal of the rose
> It was that stung.

But as he grew older he desired experiences that were bitter and harsh:

The hurt is not enough:
I long for weight and strength
To feel the earth as rough
To all my length.

The poet should therefore make his poetry out of rigor and difficulty. Presumably Frost would say that the value in a poem is involved in the sense it gives of the emotional impact life made. "The Aim Was Song," more explicitly about poetry than "New Hampshire" or "To Earthward," says that man is artificer, that is, he subdues or controls nature. The poet takes the wind and turns it into song:

He took a little in his mouth,
  And held it long enough for north
To be converted into south,
  And then by measure blew it forth.

North is nature in its raw forms, and south is nature after man has brought it under control, idealizing and loving it in the process.

"On a Bird Singing in Its Sleep," from *A Further Range*, is the poet Frost asking what is the relationship of art to nature and to human life. The poem describes a bird singing in the night—and by bird he means poet:

A bird half wakened in the lunar noon
Sang halfway through its little inborn tune.
Partly because it sang but once all night
And that from no especial bush's height;
Partly because it sang ventriloquist
And had the inspiration to desist
Almost before the prick of hostile ears,
It ventured less in peril than appears.
It could not have come down to us so far
Through the interstices of things ajar
On the long bead chain of repeated birth
To be a bird while we are men on earth
If singing out of sleep and dream that way
Had made it much more easily a prey.

Does art belong in the world, in a world that finally we do not understand? Frost replies that art, like the bird's song, has belonged to our kind immemorially. A certain kind of art, he also says, the kind that attempts to lift us into romantic idealism, could make us vulnerable at many points.

The poet should take human life for what it is, with one foot in nature, and the other lifted a little bit above it.

Frost is sometimes held up, in contrast with T. S. Eliot or James Joyce, as an optimistic poet. If he is more optimistic than either it is in a special sense of the word. A close look at "Birches," in contrast to "Ash Wednesday," will show that Frost has no expectations of another world, and a close look at "The Demiurge," in contrast with "The Four Quartets," will show that he puts little stock in metaphysical speculations. Again, a poem such as "An Old Man's Winter Night," from *Mountain Interval*, is certainly as disenchanted as any poem one is likely to find in Eliot. There is a deep and profound sense of comedy in Joyce. There is comedy in Frost too, but it seems to have its source in whimsy, an ironic playfulness, rather than in a deep *joie de vivre*. He has contemplated the world in all its variety and decided that, all things considered, it is better to be an optimist.

Ezra Pound

The Mauberley *Sequence*

M. L. Rosenthal

We have labeled the *Mauberley* poems and the *Cantos* "sequences," and it may help the general reader to be reminded of the implications of this label. Long poem-sequences are as familiar as, and much older than, the Elizabethan sonnet cycles, or as that cumbersomely unfolded series of allegorical narratives *The Faerie Queene*. In more recent times, to skip over innumerable other instances, we have Whitman's sequences, most notably his *Song of Myself;* and we must bear in mind Whitman's conception of the *whole* of his poetry as organically unified, the Self writ large: "Who touches these poems touches a man." A number of modern poets have turned to the sequence as a rough equivalent for the most ambitious traditional forms, and for the epic particularly. It may well have been Whitman who called this turn most decisively. At any rate, one has only to look at the song cycle of Yeats and the sequences of Eliot, Hart Crane, and a large number of other writers besides Pound to confirm this development.

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The sequence is not a fixed form, and through this fact alone becomes very different from the classical elegy, ode, or epic. But we can say of it that in the work of the moderns from Whitman on it consists of a larger structure made up of more or less self-sufficient units, each contributing both conceptually and stylistically to the organic life of the whole. Some units, poems like the "Envoi" of *Mauberley* and Canto 13, are able to stand alone. Others are relatively more dependent on the rest, though they may be essential to the sequence. While the order of parts is as *necessary* as the poet can make it, the principle of the design may not make itself felt at first; on the other hand, though in theory *any* work of art will rearrange itself, so to speak, around whatever in it initially seizes upon our attention, the sequence (like the mural painting) seems to give us more freedom than other poetic forms to start from any point within it that we find convenient. With Pound especially the reader ought to take advantage of this characteristic. For instance, most of us would find the first part of *Mauberley* more quickly available than the second to our understanding, and within it we would find the second, fourth, and fifth poems, and probably the "Envoi," less demanding than the rest. Similarly 13 and 45 are certainly among the most readily intelligible of the *Cantos*. These six poems, therefore, are poems we can fruitfully read first in their respective sequences, together with whatever passages elsewhere along the line take our fancies.

Looking at the first section of *Mauberley* from this standpoint, we shall quickly light upon some salient characteristics. Poem II begins with a little battery of nervous rhymes contrasting the machine age's "aesthetic" with that of classicism:

> The age demanded an image
> Of its accelerated grimace,
> Something for the modern stage,
> Not, at any rate, an Attic grace; . . . .

The nervous effect is created partly by the two feminine endings that follow upon one another, partly by the rhyming of stressed and unstressed syllable in alternate lines. The distorted picture called up by "accelerated grimace" shows the speaker's contempt for what the "age demanded." Pound underlines his contempt in the next two stanzas, coining a slogan for the age:

> Better mendacities
> Than the classics in paraphrase!

Our epoch, he says, "assuredly" prefers plaster to alabaster, a mass-produced art to "the 'sculpture' of rhyme."

Poem II is therefore an assault on the age. Moving on to Poem IV we find an even more typical piece of Poundian rhetorical verse. This poem must be read aloud if the full value of its cumulative compassion and anger is to be felt, but as a poem of profound disillusionment, one of the early literary reactions against the War and a forerunner of the many postwar novels expressing the same responses, what it has to say is perfectly clear. The young, whatever their motives for going to war, are the victims of "wastage as never before." Those who survive must return

> home to old lies and new infamy;
> usury age-old and age-thick
> and liars in public places. . . .

Though the mood here is a continuation of that in Poem II, bitterness and irony are progressively deepened right up to the final, climactic line: "laughter out of dead bellies." The next poem, the fifth, then makes another turn on the same subject: the War. The contrast between the young in all their quickness and fresh zest (described in two lines that have the restrained pathos of a Greek epitaph) and the civilization for which they have died is restated with superb poetic economy. Much of the work of contrast is done through an alliterative device, the linking of words beginning in *b*. First there is the word "best," to suggest the youthful dead themselves, and then in angry machine-gun bursts the words for a rotten society—"an old *b*itch gone in the teeth," "a *b*otched civilization"—and for its neglected heritage recalled only as a cynical pretext for inspiring the young in war: "two gross of *b*roken statues" and "a few thousand *b*attered *b*ooks."

"Envoi," which brings the 1919 section of *Mauberley* to a close, is not an assault on the times but an affirmation of artistic principle. Modeled on Edmund Waller's seventeenth-century poem "Go lovely rose," which was set to music by his contemporary Henry Lawes, it expresses the poet's desire to catch in an eternal moment one essence of both life and art in the image of a loved woman who sings out "that song of Lawes." There is an echo of Shakespeare when the speaker says he would bid "her graces" live

> As roses might, in magic amber laid,
> Red overwrought with orange and all made
> One substance and one colour
> Braving time.

And there is a carry-over from the aestheticism of the nineties in the thought with which the poem concludes, that immortality is to be gained only through artistic means which

> Might, in new ages, gain her worshipers,
> When our two dusts with Waller's shall be laid,
> Siftings on siftings in oblivion,
> Till change hath broken down
> All things save Beauty alone.

These four less difficult poems in the sequence throw enough light on the others to lead us directly to the perspective of the whole: We have moved into an age in which cheap standards of workmanship, anti-aestheticism, and the betrayal of beauty and tradition are the order of the day; but the poet does not accept this order. Rather, he lashes out against it, seeing in the destructiveness of the War its true, annihilating meaning. Through the perfection of his own craftsmanship in these poems, as well as through what he says, he affirms the superiority of his own vision.

Here, then, is the essence of the first section of *Mauberley*. But the sequence consists not merely of a few poems whose attitudes support and complement one another. It also takes the form of a kind of literary (but not literal) autobiography, in which the poet sizes up the state of the world of letters and his own place in it after three years of attempting to make himself and his viewpoint felt. In another sense, it takes the form of a voyage of literary exploration in contemporary England, with attention also to the condition of society at large and to the past circumstances out of which the present situation, at the end of the Great War, has developed. "The sequence," writes Pound, is "distinctly a farewell to London." It is also a crucial statement of the relation between poetry and Anglo-American culture as he sees it, and in the final balance it would seem to be a farewell to the illusion that there is any hope for poetry in that culture.

Going back to the beginning, we can see that although the protagonist of the sequence is the fictitious "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" the first poem is titled "E. P. Ode pour l'Election de Son Sepulchre." Translated, this is "Ezra Pound, Ode on the Occasion of Choosing His Burial Place." (The self-ironic title is borrowed from a poem by Ronsard.) So Mauberley is Pound's conception of himself at one remove and in whatever dimensions these poems provide. Now who is Mauberley-Pound in this first poem? He is a man, the first two stanzas tell us, who has fought in vain against the drift of the times to "resuscitate the dead art / Of poetry." But England has regarded him as hopelessly "out of key" with the age, especially as he has come from the United States, "a half savage country." Like Capaneus, who defied Zeus and was destroyed by lightning, he is a would-be hero victimized by his own hubris. The reference (to a figure in Aeschylus' play *The Seven Against Thebes*) leads to another classical allusion, this time to Book XII of the *Odyssey*, where the Sirens are shown singing their seductively compassionate song to Odysseus. The comparison between E. P. and Odysseus is developed over two stanzas, establishing an identification like that of the *Cantos*. He has lingered in the dangerous, choppy seas of the "rocks" of English culture; presumably he had cherished hopes that the superficial classical sophistication of the British literary and academic world was the real thing, and that he would find his true home, his Ithaca and Penelope, there. But his "true Penelope" was not the pretentious show-classicism of England but the dedicated, stylistically precise, unsqueamishly truthful art of Flaubert—the true classicism of the modern world. This point established, the last stanza returns to the mock-humble tone of the first with an echo from Villon's Grand Testament in which the poet talks of his own "passing away" in "the thirtieth year of his age" and with a final pompous comment on that event, in the voice of the chairman of some imaginary committee of literary stuffed shirts:

> . . . the case presents
> No adjunct to the Muses' diadem.

On the surface, this supremely ironic opening poem concedes defeat; actually, in various subtle ways, it asserts the continuing value of the poet's frustrated mission. Almost every line, by virtue of its very phrasing, proclaims the glory of "the tradition"; and the Homeric quotation near its center becomes, not only through what it says literally—"for we know all the things that are in Troy"—but also because of its cultural connotation *as* a Homeric quotation, a symbol in its own right. Even untranslated, it would serve as a symbol of the mystery behind the tradition, undefined though apparently related to the associations connected with Capaneus and Odysseus. Hence it should not surprise us that in the next four poems the speaker breaks loose from the pretense that he has been wrong to make his great effort. Rather, he has been entranced by the Siren-song, and after locating himself more accurately he can shift into the specifics of his complaint against the world his art has been unable to affect. Poem II is transitional, but Poem III is a *complete* list of grievances, against the decadence of fashionable women's clothing and their musical education as well as against the loss of mystery in modern religion and the supposed emptiness of modern democracy. Lines 15–16 tell us once more that nowadays we see The Beautiful "decreed in the market place," and the poem ends with a mock-despairing cry to Apollo which includes a quotation from Pindar translated for us in the next line. (The "tin" of the last line is a flip pun on the interrogative repeated three times in the Greek quotation.)

The reader will notice somewhere along the line that most of the *Mauberley* poems are written in approximately the same kind of stanza, a quatrain with alternating rhymes, sometimes in the second and fourth lines only. There are inconsistencies of line-length and rhyme-arrangement, but the basic pattern holds even in Poem IV; "Envoi," it is true, departs more than the others from it, but "Go lovely rose," on the form of which "Envoi" is a free variation, comes very close to it. The "inconsistencies," of course, are deliberate modulations to serve particular purposes, as when in Poem IV the shortened lines and piled-up, almost doggerel rhymes help to build up a quick emotional charge and an incantatory rhythm, whereupon rhyme is dropped except for repetitions and the stanzas are broken up into rhetorical units. In "E. P. Ode," on the other hand, the lines are of uniform length and the rhymes, though occasionally polylingual, are all exact. The tone of elegant, subtle, literate intellectual control here demands such exactness. "Envoi," in which the poet bursts into a song whose mood counteracts the cutting, critical drive of the sequence as a whole, is quite properly furthest from the norm set up by the opening "Ode."

After the elegiac and savage climax of the fifth poem, the sequence shifts to some close-ups of the nineties and before. Here we see the beginnings of the modern predicament of the poet—the stuffiness of the late nineteenth century, the attack on the "fleshly school of poetry" by Robert Buchanan in 1871, the "stillbirth" twelve years before that of the English *Rubaiyat*, the abuse of Rossetti and Swinburne, and the relegation of the Muse to prostitute-status. The "Yeux Glauques" of the sixth poem refers to the "thin, clear gaze" of the Muse, here identified with the model for the Burne-Jones paintings alluded to in the third stanza, and also, by a shift of association, with the girl so compassionately presented in Rossetti's poem "Jenny." (Mrs. Rossetti was Burne-Jones's model.) In this period the dedicated artist not only saw his work disregarded, we are told; he also saw himself condemned as immoral. And so in the seventh poem, whose title alludes to the pathetic outcry in the *Purgatorio* of La Pia, we see, through the eyes of M. Verog (actually Victor Plarr, Dowson's biographer), how Dowson and Johnson met the hostile indifference to poetry in the nineties. In these poems Pound employs a number of allusions at first bewilderingly unfamiliar in order to recall the exact atmosphere of the times. But what stands out in the imagery connoting the defeat of art in England:

Fœtid Buchanan lifted up his voice
When that faun's head of hers
Became a pastime for
Painters and adulterers.

Even the incidental background descriptions carry this connotation of defeat:

Among the pickled fœtuses and bottled bones. . . .

And here too we have echoes of the poet's ironic "confession" of error in Poem I:

M. Verog, out of step with the decade,
Detached from his contemporaries,
Neglected by the young,
Because of these reveries.

The portrait of "Brennbaum," a modern assimilated Jew who has all but forgotten his Hebraic heritage in his stiff, uncommunicatively British gentility, gives us yet another view of a society every phase of which reflects loss of meaning. Like Mr. Nixon, the literary businessman, and like the "conservatrix of Milésien" (in Poem XI) who lacks taste and the appreciation of tradition despite her pretensions, he symbolizes a condition which has made retreat or escape virtually a physical necessity for "the stylist" of Poem X. Nor can he look for literary patronage of the sort which came to an end in Dr. Johnson's day. As Poem XII shows, "The Lady Valentine" may use him to enhance her own social prestige, or to stimulate some incidental sexual excitement in her life, or, "in the case of revolution," as "a possible friend and comforter." But her "well-gowned approbation" will bring him no more real support than the world of professional letters will bring him now that, in Fleet Street,

The sale of half-hose has
Long since superseded the cultivation
Of Pierian roses.

In the second portion of the *Mauberley* sequence (1920), all the themes we have noted are recapitulated, but with a difference. Whereas the speaker in the 1919 group had concentrated attention on specific points of attack in the "outside world" of society and of the cultural situation, bluntly challenging it with his own aesthetic values, his attention is now directed almost wholly inward. *Mauberley* (1919) is externalized, objective; *Mauberley* (1920) gives us the subjective dimension. Here the speaker is sure of his sensitivity but not of his strength as an artist; he discounts himself and withdraws, communicating his uncertainties and fear of failure. The epigraph, modified from Ovid's Latin, gives us an image of pure frustration: "mouths snapping at empty air." Poem I in this section, though it parallels its counterpart in the first movement, is developed in a series of elliptical sentences except for stanza two, in which the antecedent poem is quoted directly:

> "His true Penelope
> Was Flaubert,"
> And his tool
> The engraver's.

Whereas the first part of the sequence had spoken out for a virile, classically precise art in the great tradition, here the poet describes himself as having turned from delicate etching in the nineteenth century manner of Jaquemart to the skill of Roman and Renaissance medalists. That is, though he has turned from more effeminately ornamental minor artistry to a method informed by classical criteria, he is still working in a minor mode. He may approach the successes of a Pisanello, but he feels, or fears, he cannot approach the robust success of the great Greek masterpieces, cannot "forge Achaia" in the image of his Homeric visions. These thoughts come through as half-statements, expressing syntactically a dread of ultimate failure not unlike that of Browning's Andrea del Sarto or Eliot's Prufrock.

The speaker's fears are carried over subtly and somewhat ambiguously into Poem II. However, the French epigraph, actually Pound's own composition, extends the theme by introducing a new consideration: the relation between aesthetic sensitivity and the ability to know love in terms suggesting both delicate idealism and sensuality. The poem itself, introspective and elusive, employs a partly stream-of-consciousness method to describe and account for the failure of Mauberley's mission during the three lost years. He has been moving among phantasmagoria, among fantastic, illusory images of the night ("NUKTIS 'AGALMA"), finding his bearings and closing in on the "orchid" of his vision of ideal beauty. But given his limited kind of talent, a talent for making, in poetry, "curious heads in medallion," it is to be doubted whether he can in any case realize his ideal. And between the phantasmagoria on the one hand and this newly recognized predicament on the other, he has somehow let go by the opportunity for love in its most full-blown sense.

He had passed, inconscient, full gaze,
The wide-banded irides
And botticellian sprays implied
In their diastasis. . . .

Both a failure of sexual awareness (and perhaps performance) and a failure to see deeply enough into the orchid's "botticellian" meaning (the reference is to the famous painting of the birth of Venus) to give it richly sensuous embodiment seem to be implied in this phrasing. The psychological components of his failure to impress the public and of his dismissal by his "self-styled 'his betters' " are a stale sensation of having missed out on the main chance and a distrust of his own powers. In this poem Pound adds greatly to the authority of his sequence, by giving Mauberley introspective depth and body. It will be clear that the shadings and qualifications that so profoundly modify our understanding of the speaker's whole nature here could not have been given before we had come to grips with the "outer" Mauberley-Pound of the first part. We have seen him dressed for the forum; now we see him naked and alone. "Envoi," which presents the ideal he would live by, bridges the gap between the two Mauberleys revealed with such moving and startling faithfulness. But after the confession of Poem II and the revisions of the Odysseus-image that follow in the next two parts (" 'The Age Demanded' " and Poem IV), "Medallion"—the closing poem—throws a new light on the speaker's relation to the tradition as it was bravely proclaimed in "Envoi."

But we are moving too quickly perhaps. To go back now and follow through in order, " 'The Age Demanded' " takes its title, as the author's note reminds us, from the opening line in Poem II of *Mauberley* 1919. However, it focuses less on "the age" than on what the earlier piece, in its half-mimicry of Philistine criticism, calls "the obscure reveries of the inward gaze." Retreat to the world of these reveries is the poet's response to the age's demand for cheap, time-serving workmanship. As unfit for such drudgery as the doves that draw Aphrodite's chariot would be for a "chain bit," he has put on an "armour/Against utter consternation": the armour of imperviousness, impassive regression, and isolation. What Mauberley says of himself is of course true generally for the drift of modern poetry. Things, though, are not what they seem, for we know that the motives and meanings in which he deals, and in which the poets (like Pound) for whom he speaks deal, are anything but irrelevant. His fears are real but not finally decisive in his self-evaluation, a fact we need to remember as we see this psychological poetic *novella* in action and watch Mauberley's heroically active image of himself dwindle into that of the merest passive resistance and private self-delighting with "imaginary/Audition of the phantasmal sea-surge." Poem IV carries the dwindling of the image to its logical conclusion short of zero:

> "I was
> And I no more exist;
> Here drifted
> An hedonist."

Finally, "Medallion" portrays the singing lady of "Envoi" in a similarly shrunken imagery. The lovely singer at the piano is still conceived in terms of the service of Aphrodite. But the goddess herself (as Poem II showed) is not revealed in the full "diastasis" of Botticelli's conception; instead, she is seen through the medium of a lesser art, a Luini painting or the illustration in an archaeological study:

> As Anadyomene in the opening
> Pages of Reinach.

The Muse of "Yeux Glauques," though degraded and bewildered, had been more immediately womanly. Now, protected by glaze or a "suave bounding-line," she has a frozen quality, is all unrealized potentiality in "metal, or intractable amber."

But the potentiality remains; the strong and the weak Mauberley are after all one and the same: a single *persona* seen in opposing yet interactive lights.[1] Just as the *method* of the Initial "Ode" counteracts its surface confession of failure, so also does the extraordinary felicity of color, sound, and nuance in the 1920 movement correct, if it does not belie them entirely, the speaker's self-abnegations. Mauberley's confessions are really a charge of cultural failure from the standpoint of the culture's own most cultivated sensibilities, and his psychological crisis becomes an expression of despair for the future of social imagination and integrity. It is not, finally, himself and his art that he denies but the promise of his civilization. *Mauberley* (1920) is thus the purest example we have of Pound's irony.

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[1] Espey differs considerably from us on this point, although we would certainly both agree that, as he says, "in the person of Mauberley Pound was rejecting—though . . . this is altogether outside the limits of the poem . . . —a mask of what he feared to become as an artist by remaining in England." (p. 83) The greatest irony of *Mauberley* is the strength it gains from confessing vulnerability. The bawdy suggestiveness of Mauberley-Pound's language, to which Espey calls our attention repeatedly, is one more instance of his audacity and defiance in the midst of *apparent* confused retreat.

T. S. Eliot

The 'Objective Correlative'

F. O. MATTHIESSEN

> What is *not* interesting, is that which does not add to our knowledge of any kind; that which is vaguely conceived and loosely drawn; a representation which is general, indeterminate, and faint instead of being particular, precise, and firm. . . . What are the eternal objects of poetry, among all nations and at all times? They are actions; human actions.
>
> MATTHEW ARNOLD, Preface to *Poems,* 1853

IF THE NATURAL DEMANDS of their mediums took Joyce and Eliot to the opposite poles of expansion and compression, the qualities of experience they were endeavouring to present were enough alike to lead to marked parallels in certain of their qualities of expression. As Eliot ob-

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served in an unpublished lecture on the method of *Ulysses* (1933): 'In some minds certain memories, both from reading and life, become charged with emotional significance. All these are used, so that intensity is gained at the expense of clarity.' There could not be a closer annotation of Eliot's own method, and I therefore want to consider some of its implications. It is no longer necessary, as it would have been, before the lyrical impulse of his poetry had been generally perceived, to spend much time defending Eliot's work against the charge of being over-intellectualized. He has himself taken pains on many occasions to point out that the concern of the poet is never with thought so much as with finding 'the emotional equivalent of thought'; that the essential function of poetry is not intellectual but emotional; that the business of Dante or Shakespeare was 'to express the greatest emotional intensity of his time, based on whatever his time happened to think.' All that he insists is that the more intelligent the poet is the better, since he is thus likely to be wider in his interests and more mature in his expression of them. He believes also that 'fundamental brain-work' can be justly demanded of the reader, particularly since 'our civilization, as it exists at present . . . comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results.' But purely in terms of the elements of tradition which Eliot has attempted to bring to fresh expression in his own poetry, it is by now apparent that his principal desire is not for intellectual density but for richness and subtlety of emotional impression.

But in his effort to convey the full intricacy of the moment, in his own partial sacrifice of clarity for range of implication, it is perhaps still necessary to show that he is not making obscure or arbitrary associations which are too personal to be followed by the reader. Actually Eliot was not being in the least paradoxical when he stressed the importance to the poet of Dante's power to create 'clear, visual images.' For he has repeatedly insisted that 'the poet does not aim to excite—that is not even a test of his success—but to set something down.' What he means by that is the prime importance of concrete presentation of carefully observed details. (It should not be forgotten that the title of his first book was *Prufrock and Other Observations.*) He is therein close to Hulme's conviction that 'the great aim is accurate, precise, and definite description,' close to Ezra Pound's preoccupation in finding the exact fresh word, related also to the sharp visual discoveries of modern painting from Cézanne to Picasso. Eliot compresses his descriptions so tightly that you have to give them time to unfold in your mind:

> The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
> Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
> Crosses the brown land, unheard.

It takes many readings of 'The Fire Sermon' before you see how complete a picture of the river's desolation is revealed to you from the moment of those opening three lines: the tearing away of the lovely ampleness with which summer trees form a canopy over the stream, leaving the bleak bareness of autumn; the sinister undertone that is started by seeing the leaves as drowning fingers clutching at the bank; the utter desertion conveyed by the fact that the wind is unheard. It is as true of these lines as Eliot found it of Coleridge's imagery stored-up from the voyagers that 'it is usually the accurate images, the fidelity of which may still be recognized, that are the most telling.'

To be sure, Eliot's observations are not primarily of physical objects; his most sustained analysis is applied to states of mind and emotion. But he holds none the less that permanent poetry is always a presentation of thought and feeling 'by a statement of events in human action or objects in the external world.' In his view the poet's emotions are not *in themselves* important; as he remarked in elucidation of Valéry, 'not our feelings, but the pattern which we make of our feelings is the centre of value.' The lasting poem is not the result of pouring out personal emotion, for 'the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.' This passage will not yield its full significance without careful reading; but it is already a *locus classicus* of criticism. It furnishes, for example, the exact clue to the triumph of *Samson Agonistes*, to Milton's complete success there in finding a dramatic situation that would externalize his own emotions and thus give them universal stature. On the other hand, failure to find an adequate 'chain of events,' and a consequent confusion of purely personal feelings with those of the hero is what leaves Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* so vague and vaporous. And the reason why 'Gerontion' is the most mature, balanced work of art among Eliot's earlier poems is that he hit upon a situation in the sombre brooding of the old man that enabled him to set down a particular statement of life in concrete objectified form.

He is not writing in his own person: the situation of Gerontion is even farther from his own than that of the middle-aged Prufrock had been when Eliot created him while still in his early twenties. I do not mean that elements of Eliot's own experience, of his own thought and feeling, do not enter into these characters; in fact, the source of some of the wittiest irony in 'Prufrock' would seem to spring from Eliot's detached ability to mock also the supercultivated fastidious young man from Harvard. But the point is that the hero of the poem is not such a figure; and that, as a result, Eliot's rapier thrusts have full play with no risk of becoming clumsily involved in purely personal associations. By choosing a character apart from his immediate experience he has been able to concentrate entirely, not on his own feelings, but on the creation of his poem. Thus everything important which he had to say about a certain kind of frustration and longing also found its articulation in this objectified transmuted form; just as the double feeling of his repulsion from vulgarity, and yet his shy attraction to the coarse earthiness of common life have found their complete symbol in Sweeney. And so, in like fashion, Eliot can project into the thoughts of Gerontion an expression of one of his most moving, recurrent themes: the horror of a life without faith, its disillusioned weariness of knowledge, its agonized slow drying up of the springs of emotion.

It should now also be clear that his understanding of the value of the 'objective correlative' was what caused Eliot to base the dramatic lyric intensity of *The Waste Land* in the externalized structure of parallel myths. It also led him to give the poem even further focus by sifting it through the eyes of a central observer, Tiresias—a device which Eliot may have learned in part from Henry James's similar use of Strether in *The Ambassadors*. As Eliot states in a note, 'What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem.' And Tiresias is the exact symbol for such haunting inclusive consciousness: only Tiresias, who had experienced life both as a man and a woman, who, though blind, possessed the torturing faculty of being able to foresee the future, could contain in his vision the ranges of life in a great metropolis. Only his infinitely sensitive power to 'foresuffer all' could embrace the violent contrasts (and samenesses) that are now packed into the compass of a few square blocks: the dead luxury of the upper class, the vast uninspired bourgeois existence, the broken fragments of the talk of the poor overheard in a bar. Incidentally, the clearest perception of Eliot's range in ability to fit his style to his subject is furnished by the remarkably different manners in which he presents these three classes of society. Perhaps the sharpest dramatic effect in the whole poem lies in the contrasting halves of 'The

Game of Chess,' the abrupt shift from an elaborately sensuous style that can build up an atmosphere of cloying richness to one which catches the very cadences of Cockney speech in a pub. And then, in the next section, in order to suggest the huge commercialized world that lies between these two extremes, Eliot portrays the characteristic scene between the typist and the clerk, and suggests the denatured quality of their life by a deliberate mechanization of his rhythm, as well as by the first continuous use of rhyme in the poem, which, being unexpected, contributes to heighten his effect. At the same time, beneath all these contrasts in appearance, are being stressed the similar human situations in which all these different people are found: they are all playing the same stale game, burning alike with sterile desire. They stand in common need of regeneration.

Eliot's steady emphasis on the importance of wholeness of construction perhaps explains best why it is fair to separate Pound and Eliot by saying that 'Pound avait étudié la diction poétique, Eliot étudie le style.' This distinction is not intended in the least to minimize Eliot's very great obligations to Pound, or the stimulus which he received from the slightly elder poet's first enunciation of his poetic theory in the years when Eliot was just out of college. Pound dwelt on the necessity of distinct presentation of something concrete; on accuracy and economy of language—'to use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation'; and, regarding rhythm, on the necessity of composing 'in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in the sequence of the metronome.' That Eliot has followed all three of these technical principles is to be seen everywhere in his work.

Pound also defined the nature of an image in such a way as to stress the union of sense and thought, the presence of the idea *in* the image: 'An "Image" is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.' That definition would seem to be in the direction of the 'objective correlative,' and would certainly apply directly to what Eliot was trying to do, for instance, in such a line as

> I have measured out my life with coffee spoons.

But the trouble is that Pound virtually stopped short with the definition of details; and it remained for Eliot to bring such technical discoveries to their full fruition by building them into an architectural whole. This limitation of Pound's may help to explain why his greatest success has been in his translations, where he had an external structure to rely upon and could give his entire care to his extraordinary verbal and rhythmical expertness; as well as why his *Cantos*, though they have already proved a school of versification for younger poets, are comparatively formless; and why his most living original poems are the *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* series of 1920, which show how Pound, in his turn, had begun to feel the influence of the method of Eliot.

A passage from 'Gerontion' will furnish perhaps the best example of the kind of hard precision with which Eliot's reliance upon 'a set of objects' enables him to thread together the range of his associations:

> I an old man,
> A dull head among windy spaces.
>
> Signs are taken for wonders. 'We would see a sign!'
> The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
> Swaddled with darkness. In the juvescence of the year
> Came Christ the tiger
>
> In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas,
> To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk
> Among whispers; by Mr. Silvero
> With caressing hands, at Limoges
> Who walked all night in the next room;
>
> By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians;
> By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room
> Shifting the candles; Fraülein von Kulp
> Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door.
> Vacant shuttles
> Weave the wind. I have no ghosts,
> An old man in a draughty house
> Under a windy knob.

The transitions are sudden, but, in terms of the context, unmistakable. There could hardly be a more effective way of stressing the intimate connection between the mysteries of religion and sex than by linking together the Christian story with the upsurging energies of spring. Yet it is also 'depraved' May, and suddenly we are aware that it is not just the Holy Communion that is being eaten and drunk 'among whispers': that last phrase also relates to the empty, slightly sinister cosmopolitan world in which Gerontion's life has been betrayed, his passion and ardour have been divided and lost. The series of glimpses of various figures in this world illustrates what Eliot tries to convey by his use of images. His design is to give the *exact* perceived detail, without comment, and let that picture carry its own connotations. As he said once in conversation, the images here are 'consciously concrete'; they correspond as closely as possible to something he has actually seen and remembered. But he also believes that if they are clearly rendered, they will stand for something larger than themselves; they will not depend for their apprehension upon any private reference, but will become 'unconsciously general.'

A similar example of his use of imagery is provided by a passage in the final poem of *Ash Wednesday*, which is also notable in revealing the direction in which Eliot had travelled in the ten years intervening since 'Gerontion.' His technique is greatly simplified: the quick contrasts of Donne and Laforgue have been replaced by something nearer to the limpidity of Dante. He wants to embody the reflection that although he desires to focus his mind upon God, although his spirit, in its ascent of the purgatorial mount, does not want to be distracted any longer by sensuous beauty, still,

> though I do not wish to wish these things,
> From the wide window towards the granite shore
> The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying
> Unbroken wings
>
> And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices
> In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices
> And the weak spirit quickens to rebel
> For the bent golden-rod and the lost sea smell
> Quickens to recover
> The cry of quail and the whirling plover
> And the blind eye creates
> The empty forms between the ivory gates
> And smell renews the salt savor of the sandy earth

It is impossible to divorce the reflection from the imagery. Exact description of memories of the varied loveliness of the New England coast expresses the very sensation of his distraction, of his turning, in spite of his will, away from the contemplation of God. He is momentarily forgetful of the penance of humility appointed for Ash Wednesday; for he has been lured back to the human realm of desire and loss by the enchantment of the senses.

I do not want to give the impression of trying to make Eliot's poetry seem easy, or of trying to demonstrate that his lines possess just one restricted meaning. Indeed, by his own account of the 'consciously concrete' and 'unconsciously general,' it is apparent that he believes that poetry should suggest much more than it can state directly to the mind. However, recognition of this impalpable element in poetry, of the fact that its range of meaning inevitably varies for different readers, does not diminish in the least the poet's responsibility to centre on the specific and distinct. Eliot notes that speaking of 'the incommunicable' in literature may often mean merely 'the vague and unformed.' His understanding of the fact that 'suggestion' is of doubtful worth unless radiating from a solid core of meaning, lies behind his analysis of why a confessedly slight poem like Marvell's 'The Nymph and the Fawn' is so much more satisfactory than William Morris's comparable effort in 'The Nymph's Song to Hylas':

> The effect of Morris's charming poem depends upon the mistiness of the feeling and the vagueness of its object; the effect of Marvell's poem upon its bright, hard precision . . . The verses of Morris, which are nothing if not an attempt to suggest, really suggest nothing; and we are inclined to infer that the suggestiveness is the aura around a bright clear centre, that you cannot have the aura alone.

This necessity to concentrate on something definite is exactly what Eliot means by his repeated statement that the evocation of emotion by means of complete, concrete objectification is the only right way of expressing emotion in art.

The way in which Eliot secures both definiteness of statement and indefiniteness of suggestion by building his imagery upon an objective structure can be seen in the third poem in *Ash Wednesday:*

At the first turning of the second stair
I turned and saw below
The same shape twisted on the banister
Under the vapour in the fetid air
Struggling with the devil of the stairs who wears
The deceitful face of hope and of despair.

At the second turning of the second stair
I left them twisting, turning below;
There were no more faces and the stair was dark,
Damp, jaggèd, like an old man's mouth drivelling,
  beyond repair,
Or the toothed gullet of an agèd shark.

At the first turning of the third stair
Was a slotted window bellied like the fig's fruit
And beyond the hawthorn blossom and a pasture scene
The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green

Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.
Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,
Lilac and brown hair;
Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind
  over the third stair,
Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair
Climbing the third stair.

Lord, I am not worthy
Lord, I am not worthy

but speak the word only.

The symbol of the stair is perfectly concrete whether or not we identify it with Dante's purgatorial mount. For, in either case, the rhythms give us the feeling of difficult climbing movement; and each turning of the stair presents a distinct stage of spiritual struggle. The sinister horror of what he saw below him at the first turning is heightened by the very ambiguousness of the expression, 'the same shape.' Does it mean a spectre that he has been fleeing from and has felt to be pursuing him up the stair? Or, more terrifying still, does it mean his own very likeness, thus stressing the obsession with self, the inability of the individual to escape from the bonds of his own identity? Such thoughts constituted one of the principal torments for the poet of *The Waste Land*, who had

heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only,

who was unable to break through the circle of his own loneliness by giving himself up to any belief, and so, with nothing external or absolute to base his life upon, felt himself mocked equally by hope and despair, since both were equally groundless. In keeping with such reflections, the damp blackness of the second turning could represent the state of mind voiced in 'The Hollow Men,' although, speaking strictly, the utter emptiness which pervades that poem would seem to belong more entirely to an *Inferno*. But with the next turning, the poet has moved on to a third state, forgetting his despair in a glimpse of the loveliness possible in this world, and yet looking now to something 'beyond hope and despair,' to faith which shall sustain him, to his salvation through divine grace.

In such a manner Eliot's images are at the same time both exact and suggestive in their portrayal of these three spiritual stages. It is more than likely that he meant the turnings of his stair to represent something even more definite, to remind the reader that they correspond in general to the three main divisions of Dante's hill of Purgatory. At the foot of the hill were those whose sin had been the greatest, who had been guilty of love distorted, those who had loved evil things instead of God, those whose self-absorbed pride had shut them off from Him. Higher up were those whose love of God had been defective; higher still, the least gravely sinful, those who had loved excessively things which should take only a secondary place in the affections, among them the sensual and lustful. (A hint of the correspondence between these particular qualities of excess and Eliot's third stair is underscored by the image describing the window itself 'bellied like the fig's fruit.') Such a reminder that the stages of the soul which Eliot is depicting correspond also to a completely developed pattern of philosophic and religious thought, would remove the experience from anything purely personal, and would thus enable it to possess a more universal significance.

Perhaps the most important thing that is revealed by applying Eliot's conception of the 'objective correlative' to his own work is the essentially dramatic nature of all his poetry. What is said by one of the speakers in his 'Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry' certainly seems expressive of one of his own most sustained beliefs:

> What great poetry is not dramatic? Even the minor writers of the Greek Anthology, even Martial, are dramatic. Who is more dramatic than Homer or Dante? We are human beings, and in what are we more interested than in human action and human attitudes? Even when he assaults, and with supreme mastery, the divine mystery, does not Dante engage us in the question of the human attitude towards this mystery—which is dramatic?

In the terms of this description the dramatic element in poetry lies in its power to communicate a sense of real life, a sense of *the immediate present*—that is, of the full quality of a moment as it is actually felt to consist. It was Ezra Pound's great service to modern poetry to rescue the lyric from musical prettiness by his reaffirmation of the importance of such direct presentation of actuality, by his determination, as he declared in his manifesto 'Against the Crepuscular Spirit in Modern Poetry,' to substitute 'for dreams—men.' This ability to portray the very character of life is rare since it depends upon a firm grasp of experience, and thus demands from the poet a unified sensibility, a capacity of feeling that can closely interweave emotion and thought. It likewise demands a mature realization of the existence of both good and evil, and understanding that life takes on dramatic significance only when perceived as a struggle between these forces. Thus, despite Pound's emphasis on 'human action,' his failure to distinguish between individual responsibility for evil and social circumstance has the result of making his journalistic conception of Hell in the *Cantos* utterly lacking in tragic dignity—a Hell, as Eliot has remarked, 'for the *other people*, the people we read about in the newspapers, not for oneself and one's friends.' Such a Hell not only robs any implied Heaven of all authenticity, but also inevitably renders much of Pound's observation of human beings 'trivial and accidental.'

In the light of these reflections it becomes apparent that the ability to convey a sense of human reality is also destroyed by any facile idealization, or by any effort to escape into a dream world through the hypnosis of sound. The dramatic quality is also wholly lost by the merely reflective poet who, instead of making a union of emotion and thought, instead of thinking in images and thus bringing a living body to his ideas, tends to put his images aside and to fall back on abstract rhetoric when he comes to deliver his statements:

> We look before and after
>   And pine for what is not:
> Our sincerest laughter
>   With some pain is fraught;
> Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

These reflections perhaps also make clear why it is accurate to say that Donne is a dramatic poet but not Spenser; that the songs of Campion and Shakespeare are dramatic but not those of Swinburne, or why Keats at the time of his death was increasingly absorbed with the desire to write plays; or why, among poets of seemingly equal stature like Wyatt and Surrey, the ability to cut through graceful Renaissance decoration of sentiment to a bare statement of immediate emotion is what gives a few poems of the former their heightened vitality.

In defining Eliot's particular dramatic quality it is relevant to quote Rémy de Gourmont's brief characterization of symbolism, in his *Book of Masks:* 'a tendency to take only the characteristic detail out of life, to pay attention only to the act by which a man distinguishes himself from another man, and to desire only to realize essentials, results.' There could hardly be a better account of the way in which Eliot endeavours to portray 'human action and human attitudes.' He sets out to make his characters actual by confining his description of them to a perceived significant detail or characteristic gesture. This is the method by which he lets us conceive the nature of Princess Volupine by means of a glimpse of her outstretched 'meagre, blue-nailed, phthisic hand.' Or again, he creates the dramatic relevance of the figures who throng Gerontion's memory by the way he shows each of them in action. He wants to intermingle description and event in the manner in which they actually associate in a person's impressions; this is the intention emphasized by his statement that he was stimulated by Henry James' example in *The Aspern Papers* to try 'to make a place real not descriptively but by something happening there.' What 'happens' in Eliot's shorter poems is frequently no more than a single observed impression: a girl standing at the top of a stairway 'with a fugitive resentment' in her eyes; a young man handing his cousin the evening paper. Yet, as also in James, there is something both pictorial and dramatic in this single impression, something acutely revelatory of the people described. As James remarked in 'The Art of Fiction':

> What is a picture or a novel that is *not* of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it? It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way; or if it be not an incident, I think it will be hard to say what it is. At the same time it is an expression of character.

These sentences might describe the effect of Eliot's 'La Figlia che Piange' equally as well as that of one of James's own stories. The more one thinks of Eliot in relation to James, the more one realizes the extent of the similarities between them. They are similarities of content as well as of method. Both James and Eliot, no less than Hawthorne, are mainly concerned with what lies behind action and beneath appearance. In their effort to find the exact situation that will evoke an impression of the inner life, they are occupied too in expressing like states of mind and feeling. Prufrock's rankling inability to give himself to life and the kind of frustration embodied in Eliot's 'Portrait of a Lady' find their parallels many times in James. But even more significant is the realization that the qualities of spirit that rise above frustration in Eliot's later poems, as well as in James's *Portrait of a Lady* or *The Wings of the Dove*, are those which affirm the value of renunciation, sympathy, and tenderness. These qualities have long been dominant in the American strain. All three are to be found in Emily Dickinson, if with a somewhat different effect than in Hawthorne; and the two last are Whitman's most enduring tones in 'When lilacs last in the dooryard bloomed.'

T. S. Eliot: The Waste Land

F. R. Leavis

The remoteness of the civilization celebrated in *The Waste Land* from the natural rhythms is brought out, in ironical contrast, by the anthropological theme. Vegetation cults, fertility ritual, with their sympathetic magic, represent a harmony of human culture with the natural environment, and express an extreme sense of the unity of life. In the modern Waste Land

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land,

but bringing no quickening to the human spirit. Sex here is sterile, breeding not life and fulfillment but disgust, accidia and unanswerable questions. It is not easy to-day to accept the perpetuation and multiplication of life as ultimate ends.

But the anthropological background has positive functions. It plays an obvious part in evoking that particular sense of the unity of life which is essential to the poem. It helps to establish the level of experience at which the poem works, the mode of consciousness to which it belongs. In *The Waste Land* the development of impersonality that *Gerontion* shows in comparison with *Prufrock* reaches an extreme limit: it would be difficult to imagine a completer transcendence of the individual self, a completer projection of awareness. We have, in the introductory chapter, considered the poet as being at the conscious point of his age. There are ways in which it is possible to be too conscious; and to be so is, as a

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result of the break-up of forms and the loss of axioms noted above, one of the troubles of the present age (if the abstraction may be permitted, consciousness being in any case a minority affair). We recognize in modern literature the accompanying sense of futility.

The part that science in general has played in the process of disintegration is matter of commonplace: anthropology is, in the present context, a peculiarly significant expression of the scientific spirit. To the anthropological eye beliefs, religions and moralities are human habits—in their odd variety too human. Where the anthropological outlook prevails, sanctions wither. In a contemporary consciousness there is inevitably a great deal of the anthropological, and the background of *The Waste Land* is thus seen to have a further significance.

To be, then, too much conscious and conscious of too much—that is the plight:

> After such knowledge, what forgivenness?

At this point Mr. Eliot's note [1] on Tiresias deserves attention:

> Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character,' is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem.

If Mr. Eliot's readers have a right to a grievance, is it that he has not given this note more salience; for it provides the clue to *The Waste Land*. It indicates plainly enough what the poem is: an effort to focus an inclusive human consciousness. The effort, in ways suggested above, is characteristic of the age; and in an age of psycho-analysis, an age that has produced the last section of *Ulysses*, Tiresias—'venus huic erat utraque nota'—presents himself as the appropriate impersonation. A cultivated modern is (or feels himself to be) intimately aware of the experience of the opposite sex.

Such an undertaking offers a difficult problem of organization, a distinguishing character of the mode of consciousness that promotes it being a lack of organizing principle, the absence of any inherent direction. A poem that is to contain all myths cannot construct itself upon one. It is here that *From Ritual to Romance* comes in. It provides a background of reference that makes possible something in the nature of a musical [2] organization. Let us start by considering the use of the Tarot pack. Introduced in the first section, suggesting, as it does, destiny, chance and the eternal mysteries, it at once intimates the scope of the poem, the mode of its contemplation of life. It informs us as to the nature of the characters: we know that they are such as could not have relations with one another in any narrative scheme, and could not be brought together on any stage, no matter what liberties were taken with the Unities. The immediate function of the passage introducing the pack, moreover, is to evoke, in contrast with what has preceded, cosmopolitan 'high life,' and the charlatanism that battens upon it:

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[1] Note to line 218 of *The Waste Land* (*Poems 1909–1925*, p. 88).

> Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,
> Had a bad cold, nevertheless
> Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
> With a wicked pack of cards.

Mr. Eliot can achieve the banality appropriate here, and achieve at the same time, when he wants it, a deep undertone, a resonance, as it were, of fate:

> . . . and this card,
> Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
> Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
> The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.
> I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.

The peculiar menacing undertone of this associates it with a passage in the fifth section:

> Who is the third who walks always beside you?
> When I count, there are only you and I together
> But when I look ahead up the white road
> There is always another one walking beside you
> Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
> I do not know whether a man or a woman
> —But who is that on the other side of you?

The association establishes itself without any help from Mr. Eliot's note; it is there in any case, as any fit reader of poetry can report; but the note helps us to recognize its significance:

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[2] Mr. I. A. Richards uses the analogy from music in some valuable notes on Mr. Eliot that are printed in an appendix to the later editions of *The Principles of Literary Criticism.*

> The Hanged Man, a member of the traditional pack, fits my purpose in two ways: because he is associated in my mind with the Hanged God of Frazer, and because I associate him with the hooded figure in the passage of the disciples to Emmaus in Part V.

The Tarot pack, Miss Weston has established, has affiliations with fertility ritual, and so lends itself peculiarly to Mr. Eliot's purpose: the instance before us illustrates admirably how he has used its possibilities. The hooded figure in the passage just quoted is Jesus. Perhaps our being able to say so depends rather too much upon Mr. Eliot's note; but the effect of the passage does not depend so much upon the note as might appear. For Christ has figured already in the opening of the section (see *What the Thunder Said*):

> After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
> After the frosty silence in gardens
> After the agony in stony places
> The shouting and the crying
> Prison and palace and reverberation
> Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
> He who was living is now dead
> We who were living are now dying
> With a little patience

The reference is unmistakable. Yet it is not only Christ; it is also the Hanged God and all the sacrificed gods: with the 'thunder of spring' 'Adonis, Attis, Osiris' and all the others of *The Golden Bough* come in. And the 'agony in stony places' is not merely the Agony in the Garden; it is also the agony of the Waste Land, introduced in the first section: (*The Burial of the Dead*, ll. 19 ff.).

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches
>   grow
> Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
> You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket
>   no relief,
> And the dry stone no sound of water.

In *What the Thunder Said* the drouth becomes (among other things) a thirst for the waters of faith and healing, and the specifically religious enters into the orchestration of the poem. But the thunder is 'dry sterile thunder without rain'; there is no resurrection or renewal;

and after the opening passage the verse loses all buoyancy, and takes on a dragging, persistent movement as of hopeless exhaustion—

> Here is no water but only rock
> Rock and no water and the sandy road
> The road winding above among the mountains
> Which are mountains of rock without water

—the imagined sound of water coming in as a torment. There is a suggestion of fever here, a sultry ominousness—

> There is not even solitude in the mountains

—and it is this which provides the transition to the passage about the hooded figure quoted above. The ominous tone of this last passage associates it, as we have seen, with the reference (ll. 55–56) to the Hanged Man in the Tarot passage of *The Burial of the Dead*. So Christ becomes the Hanged Man, the Vegetation God; and at the same time the journey through the Waste Land along 'the sandy road' becomes the Journey to Emmaus. Mr. Eliot gives us a note on the 'third who walks always beside you':

> The following lines were stimulated by the account of one of the Antarctic expeditions (I forget which, but I think one of Shackleton's): it was related that the party of explorers, at the extremity of their strength, had the constant delusion that there was *one more member* than could actually be counted.

This might be taken to be, from our point of view, merely an interesting irrelevance, and it certainly is not necessary. But it nevertheless serves to intimate the degree of generality that Mr. Eliot intends to accompany his concrete precision: he is both definite and vague at once. 'Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples'—so one experience is not wholly distinct from another experience of the same general order; and just as all experiences 'meet in Tiresias,' so a multitude of experiences meet in each passage of the poem. Thus the passage immediately in question has still further associations. That same hallucinatory quality which relates it to what goes before recalls also the neurasthenic episode (ll. 111 ff.) in *A Game of Chess* (the second section):

> 'What is that noise?'
>   The wind under the door.
> 'What is that noise now? . . .'

All this illustrates the method of the poem, and the concentration, the depth of orchestration that Mr. Eliot achieves; the way in which the themes move in and out of one another and the predominance shifts from level to level. The transition from this passage is again by way of the general ominousness, which passes into hallucinated vision and then into nightmare:

> —But who is that on the other side of you?
>
> What is that sound high in the air
> Murmur of maternal lamentation
> Who are those hooded hordes swarming
> Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
> Ringed by the flat horizon only
> What is the city over the mountains
> Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
> Falling towers
> Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
> Vienna London
> Unreal.

The focus of attention shifts here to the outer disintegration in its large, obvious aspects, and the references to Russia and to post-war Europe in general are plain. The link between the hooded figure of the road to Emmaus and the 'hooded hordes swarming' is not much more than verbal (though appropriate to a fevered consciousness), but this phrase has an essential association with a line (56) in the passage that introduces the Tarot pack:

> I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.

These 'hooded hordes,' 'ringed by the flat horizon only,' are not merely Russians, suggestively related to the barbarian invaders of civilization; they are also humanity walking endlessly round in a ring, a further illustration of the eternal futility. 'Unreal' picks up the 'Unreal city' of *The Burial of the Dead* (l. 60), where 'Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours,' and the unreality gets further development in the nightmare passage that follows:

> And upside down in air were towers
> Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
> And voices singing out of empty cisterns and
> exhausted wells.

Then, with a transitional reference (which will be commented on later) to the theme of the Chapel Perilous, the focus shifts inwards again. 'Datta,' 'dayadhvam,' and 'damyata,' the admonitions of the thunder, are explained in a note, and in this case, at any rate, the reliance upon the note justifies itself. We need only be told once that they mean 'give, sympathize, control,' and the context preserves the meaning. The Sanscrit lends an appropriate portentousness, intimating that this is the sum of wisdom according to a great tradition, and that what we have here is a radical scrutiny into the profit of life. The irony, too, is radical:

> *Datta*: what have we given?
> My friend, blood shaking my heart
> The awful daring of a moment's surrender
> Which an age of prudence can never retract
> By this, and this only, we have existed
> . . . . .

—it is an equivocal comment. And for comment on 'sympathize' we have a reminder of the irremediable isolation of the individual. After all the agony of sympathetic transcendence, it is to the individual, the focus of consciousness, that we return:

> Shall I at least set my lands in order?

The answer comes in the bundle of fragments that ends the poem, and, in a sense, sums it up.

Not that the *poem* lacks organization and unity. The frequent judgments that it does betray a wrong approach. The author of *The Lyric Impulse in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot*, for instance, speaks of 'a definitely willed attempt to weld various fine fragments into a metaphysical whole.' But the unity of *The Waste Land* is no more 'metaphysical' than it is narrative or dramatic, and to try to elucidate it metaphysically reveals complete misunderstanding. The unity the poem aims at is that of an inclusive consciousness: the organization it achieves as a work of art is of the kind that has been illustrated, an organization that may, by analogy, be called musical. It exhibits no progression:

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me

—the thunder brings no rain to revive the Waste Land, and the poem ends where it began.

At this point the criticism has to be met that, while all this may be so, the poem in any case exists, and can exist, only for an extremely limited public equipped with special knowledge. The criticism must be admitted. But that the public for it is limited is one of the symptoms of the state of culture that produced the poem. Works expressing the finest consciousness of the age in which the word 'high-brow' has become current are almost inevitably such as to appeal only to a tiny minority.[3] It is still more serious that this minority should be more and more cut off from the world around it—should, indeed, be aware of a hostile and overwhelming environment. This amounts to an admission that there must be something limited about the kind of artistic achievement possible in our time: even Shakespeare in such conditions could hardly have been the 'universal' genius. And *The Waste Land*, clearly, is not of the order of *The Divine Comedy* or of *Lear*. The important admission, then, is not that *The Waste Land* can be appreciated only by a very small minority (how large in any age has the minority been that has really comprehended the masterpieces?), but that this limitation carries with it limitations in self-sufficiency.

These limitations, however, are easily overstressed. Most of the 'special knowledge,' dependence upon which is urged against *The Waste Land*, can fairly be held to be common to the public that would in any case read modern poetry. The poem does, indeed, to some extent lean frankly upon *From Ritual to Romance*. And sometimes it depends upon external support in ways that can hardly be justified. Let us take, for instance, the end of the third section, *The Fire Sermon*:

> la la
>
> To Carthage then I came
>
> Burning, burning, burning, burning
> O Lord Thou pluckest me out
> O Lord Thou pluckest
>
> burning

It is plain from Mr. Eliot's note on this passage—'The collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western ascetism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident'—that he intends St. Augustine and the Buddha to be actively present here. But whereas one cursory reading of *From Ritual to Romance* does all (practically) that is assigned as function to that book, no amount of reading of the *Confessions* or *Buddhism in Translation* will give these few words power to evoke the kind of presence of 'eastern and western ascetism' that seems necessary to the poem: they remain, these words, mere pointers to something outside. We can only conclude that Mr. Eliot here has not done as much as he supposes. And so with the passage (ll. 385 ff.) in *What the Thunder Said* bringing in the theme of the Chapel Perilous: it leaves too much to Miss Weston; repeated recourse to *From Ritual to Romance* will not invest it with the virtue it would assume. The irony, too, of the

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[3] This matter is discussed at length by the present author in *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* (Minority Press).

Shantih shantih shantih

that ends the poem is largely ineffective, for Mr. Eliot's note that ' "The Peace which passeth understanding" is a feeble translation of the content of this word' can impart to the word only a feeble ghost of that content for the Western reader.

Yet the weaknesses of this kind are not nearly as frequent or as damaging as critics of *The Waste Land* seem commonly to suppose. It is a self-subsistent poem, and should be obviously such. The allusions, references and quotations usually carry their own power with them as well as being justified in the appeal they make to special knowledge. 'Unreal City' (l. 60), to take an extreme instance from one end of the scale, owes nothing to Baudelaire (whatever Mr. Eliot may have owed); the note is merely interesting—though, of course, it is probable that a reader unacquainted with Baudelaire will be otherwise unqualified. The reference to Dante that follows—

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many

—has an independent force, but much is lost to the reader who does not catch the implied comparison between London and Dante's Hell. Yet the requisite knowledge of Dante is a fair demand. The knowledge of *Antony and Cleopatra* assumed in the opening of *A Game of Chess*, or of *The Tempest* in various places elsewhere, no one will boggle at. The main references in *The Waste Land* come within the classes represented by these to Dante and Shakespeare; while of the many others most of the essential carry enough of their power with them. By means of such references and quotations Mr. Eliot attains a compression, otherwise unattainable, that is essential to his aim; a compression approaching simultaneity—the co-presence in the mind of a number of different orientations, fundamental attitudes, orders of experience.

This compression and the methods it entails do make the poem difficult reading at first, and a full response comes only with familiarity.

Yet the complete rout so often reported, or inadvertently revealed—as, for instance, by the critic who assumes that *The Waste Land* is meant to be a 'metaphysical whole'—can be accounted for only by a wrong approach, an approach with inappropriate expectations. For the general nature and method of the poem should be obvious at first reading. Yet so commonly does the obvious seem to be missed that perhaps a little more elucidation (this time of the opening section) will not be found offensively superfluous. What follows is a brief analysis of *The Burial of the Dead*, the avowed intention being to point out the obvious themes and transitions: anything like a full analysis would occupy many times the space.

The first seven lines introduce the vegetation theme, associating it with the stirring of 'memory and desire.' The transition is simple: 'April,' 'spring,' 'winter,'—then

> Summer surprised us, coming over the Starn-
>   bergersee
> With a shower of rain . . .

We seem to be going straight forward, but (as the change of movement intimates) we have modulated into another plane. We are now given a particular 'memory,' and a representative one. It introduces the cosmopolitan note, a note of empty sophistication:

> In the mountains, there you feel free.
> I read, much of the night, and go south in the
>   winter.   [Cf. 'Winter kept us warm']

The next transition is a contrast and a comment, bringing this last passage into relation with the first. April may stir dull roots with spring rain, but

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
> Out of this stony rubbish?

And there follows an evocation of the Waste Land, with references to *Ezekiel* and *Ecclesiastes*, confirming the tone that intimates that this is an agony of the soul ('Son of man' relates with the Hanged Man and the Hanged God: with him 'who was living' and 'is now dead' at the opening of *What the Thunder Said*). The 'fear'—

> I will show you fear in a handful of dust

—recurs, in different modes, in the neurasthenic passage (ll. 111 ff.) of *A Game of Chess*, and in the episode of the hooded figure in *What the*

Thunder Said. The fear is partly the fear of death, but still more a nameless, ultimate fear, a horror of the completely negative.

Then comes the verse from *Tristan und Isolde*, offering a positive in contrast—the romantic absolute, love. The 'hyacinth girl,' we may say, represents 'memory and desire' (the hyacinth, directly evocative like the lilacs bred out of the Waste Land, was also one of the flowers associated with the slain vegetation god), and the 'nothing' of the Waste Land changes into the ecstasy of passion—a contrast, and something more:

> —Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth
>   garden,
> Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
> Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
> Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

In the Waste Land one is neither living nor dead. Moreover, the neurasthenic passage referred to above recalls these lines unmistakably, giving them a sinister modulation:

> 'Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
>   'What are you thinking of? What thinking?
>   What?
> 'I never know what you are thinking. Think.'
>
> . . . . .
>
> 'Do
> 'You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do
>   you remember
> 'Nothing?'

The further line from *Tristan und Isolde* ends the passage of romantic love with romantic desolation. Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante, follows; she brings in the demi-monde, so offering a further contrast—

> Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
> The lady of situations

—and introduces the Tarot pack. This passage has already received some comment, and it invites a great deal more. The 'lady of situations,' to make an obvious point, appears in the *Game of Chess*. The admonition, 'Fear death by water,' gets its response in the fourth section, *Death by Water*: death is inevitable, and the life-giving water thirsted for (and the water out of which all life comes) cannot save. But enough has been said to indicate the function of the Tarot pack, the way in which it serves in the organization of the poem.

With the 'Unreal City' the background of urban—of 'megalopolitan'—civilization becomes explicit. The allusion to Dante has already been remarked upon, and so has the way in which Saint Mary Woolnoth is echoed by the 'reminiscent bells' of *What the Thunder Said.* The portentousness of the 'dead sound on the final stroke of nine' serves as a transition, and the unreality of the City turns into the intense but meaningless horror, the absurd inconsequence, of a nightmare:

> There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying:
>   'Stetson!
> 'You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
> 'That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
> 'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this
>   year? . . .'

These last two lines pick up again the opening theme. The corpse acquires a kind of nightmare association with the slain god of *The Golden Bough*, and is at the same time a buried memory. Then, after a reference to Webster (Webster's sepulchral horrors are robust), *The Burial of the Dead* ends with the line in which Baudelaire, having developed the themes of

> La sottise, l'erreur, le péché, la lésine

and finally *L'Ennui*, suddenly turns upon the reader to remind him that he is something more.

The way in which *The Waste Land* is organized, then, should be obvious even without the aid of notes. And the poet's mastery should be as apparent in the organization as in the parts (where it has been freely acclaimed). The touch with which he manages his difficult transitions, his delicate collocations, is exquisitely sure. His tone, in all its subtle variations, exhibits a perfect control. If there is any instance where this last judgment must be qualified, it is perhaps here (from the first passage of *The Fire Sermon*):

> Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
> Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or
>   long.
> But at my back in a cold blast I hear
> The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from
>   ear to ear.

These last two lines seem to have too much of the caricature quality of *Prufrock* to be in keeping—for a certain keeping is necessary (and Mr. Eliot commonly maintains it) even in contrasts. But even if the comment is just, the occasion for it is a very rare exception.

The Waste Land, then, whatever its difficulty, is, or should be, obviously a poem.[4] It is a self-subsistent poem. Indeed, though it would lose if the notes could be suppressed and forgotten, yet the more important criticism might be said to be, not that it depends upon them too much, but rather that without them, and without the support of *From Ritual to Romance*, it would not lose more. It has, that is, certain limitations in any case; limitations inherent in the conditions that produced it. Comprehensiveness, in the very nature of the undertaking, must be in some sense at the cost of structure: absence of direction, of organizing principle, in life could hardly be made to subserve the highest kind of organization in art.

But when all qualifications have been urged, *The Waste Land* remains a great positive achievement, and one of the first importance for English poetry. In it a mind fully alive in the age compels a poetic triumph out of the peculiar difficulties facing a poet in the age. And in solving his own problem as a poet Mr. Eliot did more than solve the problem for himself. Even if *The Waste Land* had been, as used to be said, a 'dead end' for him, it would still have been a new start for English poetry.

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[4] 'It is a test (a positive test, I do not assert that it is always valid negatively), that genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood.'—T. S. Eliot, *Dante*, p. 16.

Wallace Stevens

The Practick of the Maker in Wallace Stevens

RICHARD GUSTAFSON

One contrast theme runs the length of the poems of Wallace Stevens:

> Professor Eucalyptus said, "The search
> For reality is as momentous as
> The search for God."
>
> (*An Ordinary Evening in New Haven*)

Most of his major poems are questioning thrusts at reality, as if reality were an unknown dog whose temper had to be learned by a variety of parries. And to Stevens, reality is tested and ultimately found only through the creative imagination. The term *creative imagination* here means the mental faculty that receives discrete and heterogeneous impressions from physical facts, transmutes them into a unity, and records that unity either in art or in human action. The course of this essay will

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be first to define creativity in Stevens' terms, and then to show how that definition becomes for him the necessary term for any meaning in art, religion, love, and beauty.

Stevens writes an almost schematic definition of the creative process in *So-and-So Reclining on Her Couch*. We are shown a female figure reclining.

> This mechanism, this apparition,
> Suppose we call it Projection A.

Now suppose, says Stevens, we could see suspended above the figure the hand of the artist:

> If just above her head there hung,
> Suspended in air, the slightest crown
> Of Gothic prong and practick bright,
>
> . . . Let this be called
> Projection B.

The reference to Gothic and the spelling of *practick* suggest to us that Stevens is thinking of the medieval notion of the skill, the craftsmanship of the maker. For the last projection about the figure, Stevens tells us to consider the relation between the maker and the thing made:

> . . . She floats in the contention, the flux
>
> Between the thing as idea and
> The idea as thing. She is half who made her.
> This is the final Projection, C.

The three constituents of the figure are identified. Then Stevens concludes by showing them in unity:

> The arrangement contains the desire of
> The artist. But one confides in what has no
> Concealed creator. One walks easily
>
> The unpainted shore, accepts the world
> As anything but sculpture. Good-bye,
> Mrs. Pappadopoulos, and thanks.

If we see and understand the arrangement, the figure, we see the desire of its creator, and seeing his intention, we know the thing. Here is the ancient argument by Design for the existence of God. The discussion of the figure reclining leads by analogy to the consideration of the world. Here Stevens stops, speculates wryly that we should be able to induce its artist, but that we really don't ask ourselves such questions about the world. The poem ends rather irresponsibly, with a coyness that waves off weighty matters. But Stevens is not so much interested in cosmic ontology as he is in the psychology of art.

The concern with creativity runs throughout Stevens' poems, and appears in poems that have subjects other than the specific imaginative process. However, in any of his poems, Stevens rarely strays from his concern with how the imagination transmutes reality and imparts significance to the fact of the world. Of course, the specific trinity of Projections A, B, and C is not apparent in all of his poems, but it is implicit to the extent that Stevens shows the world of fact as a collection of diffuse and discrete things whose only unity is by means of the transmuting mind. For example, in *The Idea of Order at Key West,* Stevens traces the melding of different things and occurrences: a singer, a song, a hearer, and a setting. These elements cannot be aligned with the creative trinity. They are the discrete things that the creativity unites. The singer makes the song, and in the mind of the hearer, the song and the setting blend into a unity that cannot be described in any way other than as the relation between the song and the setting. Stevens begins the poem by showing the elements in disunity, separate in themselves: his first line is "She sang beyond the genius of the sea." Later, he says: "For she was the maker of the song she sang. / The ever-hooded, tragic-gestured sea / Was merely a place by which she walked to sing."

As the poem continues, the hearer realizes that between the elements some kind of union is blending. The whole is becoming greater than the parts, more than the seascape, "More even than her voice, and ours, among / The meaningless plungings of water and the wind."

The hearer then realizes that the union is being formed by the singer, the maker. Her voice is a filter that is making order from a motley jumble of things, as a radio filter transforms the jumble of sounds into varied and ordered frequencies:

> It was her voice that made
> The sky acutest at its vanishing.
> She measured to the hour its solitude.
> She was the single artificer of the world
> In which she sang.

Further yet, there is not only order in the world through her song, there is unity. As every order bespeaks its maker, Stevens has said in

So-and-So Reclining, so here the order shows the maker, and the maker recognized becomes the unity:

And when she sang, the sea,
Whatever self it had, became the self
That was her song, for she was the maker. Then we,
As we beheld her striding there alone,
Knew that there never was a world for her
Except the one she sang and, singing, made.

The maker must then be known before total unity is seen. Because of the necessity of this recognition, the artist or the maker becomes of great concern in all of Stevens' works. Perhaps that is why he prefers the classic word *maker* to the more modern *poet*, and why he used the archaism *practick* in *So-and-So Reclining*. The word *poet* connotes in modern terms, self-expression. Stevens' artist, or poet, does not express himself for the modern value of self-therapy. Stevens' maker re-creates into order what he finds existing in disorder. Why is the initial material in disorder? Going back to the ending of *So-and-So Reclining*, we remember that Stevens admitted the need of finding order through a creator, but that the creator of the world seemed too impossibly distant to conceive of. So although man may implicitly believe in the unity of the world, he cannot account for it adequately by picturing the creator. Therefore, man accepts the world with resignation made edgy by skepticism. Man finds the peace he needs in the knowledge of his own ability to make, to re-create. Stevens' notion of re-creation is in the lineage of the classic notion of the maker. It is reminiscent of Coleridge's notion of the Secondary, or poetic, imagination: the "repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation." And Stevens himself uses the term *re-creation*. It is necessary for man, he says "to re-create, to use / The cold and earliness and bright origin." (*An Ordinary Evening in New Haven*)

Stevens is then aware of the religious need in man. To Stevens that need comes from man's prior need to find order. But the order that religion has imposed has shown no immutable fact; it has shown only myth, and myth is art. In religion, men get no further than art. And to Stevens, the man who adopts the art of the past and convinces himself that it is more than art, that it is actually fact, is a deluded man. This past sentence seems to me to be the theme of *Sunday Morning*. The indolent woman who feels on Sunday morning the "dark encroachment of that old catastrophe," the death of Christ, reasons first of all that religion pays homage to the dead and offers nothing to quench her thirst for life:

> Why should she give her bounty to the dead?
> What is divinity if it can come
> Only in silent shadows and in dreams?
> Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,
> In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else
> In any balm or beauty of the earth,
> Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?

The woman feels that thoughts of death should not lead to Heaven, but rather away from Heaven, back to earth. The sense of death should bring a greater awareness of the preciousness and vitality of life:

> Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her,
> Alone, shall come fulfillment to our dreams
> And our desires. Although she strews the leaves
> Of sure obliteration on our paths,
> The path sick sorrow took, the many paths
> Where triumph rang its brassy phrase, or love
> Whispered a little out of tenderness,
> She makes the willow shiver in the sun
> For maidens who were wont to sit and gaze
> Upon the grass, relinquished to their feet.
> She causes boys to pile new plums and pears
> On disregarded plate.

Finally the woman reasons that the ideal ritualists of Sunday morning would be a "ring of men" dancing to the rhythm of a mortal and sensuous god. They "chant in orgy on a summer morn / Their boisterous devotion to the sun, / Not as a god, but as a god might be, / Naked among them, like a savage source." They are alert to the obvious facts of the sensual world which gives them the only certain clue to their destiny as part of the earth:

> And whence they came and whither they shall go
> The dew upon their feet shall manifest.

Sunday Morning shows the skepticism of Stevens that we have seen in the previous poems. It views the world as consisting of discrete perceptions and experiences. However, in *Sunday Morning* we do not see the further step of the need for unity through art growing out of skepticism. One possible reason that *Sunday Morning* does not show this step is that the poem was composed earlier in Stevens' career than the poems which show the fuller development of the process. *Sunday Morning* appeared in 1915. *The Idea of Order at Key West* first appeared in 1934, and *So-and-So Reclining on Her Couch* in 1943. It is characteristic of most poets that the works of their seedtime are richer in the delights of the senses alone than what ideas those delights will lead to later.

Up to now, we have been looking at the development of Stevens' notion of creativity in reverse. We have seen the mature organism and then gone backwards through its gestation. In its moral, expanding development, the idea runs thus. Stevens began by doubting the religious motive because it is only art and not the mysticism it claimed to be. He then turned to the obvious sensual realities of the world as a more certain source of vitality. Stevens then began to realize that the old religious motive, the need for order, had validity because the sensual realities were too separate and could not be seen in any unity without some order imposed. Since the creative mind produces all and any order, it becomes the core of this entire process of thought.

But Stevens was no solipsist. The mind never created reality. Reality was prime and given. Its fault was that it was diffuse and distinct without the unifying power of the mind. But reality was *necessary* as seen first outside the mind. This he says in *Angel Surrounded by Paysans*:

> I am the angel of reality
> Seen for a moment standing in the door.
>
> . . . . .
>
> I am one of you and being one of you
> Is being and knowing what I am and know.
>
> Yet I am the necessary angel of earth,
> Since, in my sight, you see the earth again.

But the ragged insufficiency of reality is only the beginning of human experience.

> Reality is the beginning not the end,
> Naked Alpha, not the hierophant Omega,
> Of dense investiture, with luminous vassals.
> (*An Ordinary Evening in New Haven*)

The mind of man produces the "dense investiture" of "omega." To Stevens, the mind producing is art. The mind re-creating is the immanent nature of any order. The mind at work is a *natura naturans*, a constant poetry.

The production of a work of art is not the whole of art. The creative process schematized in *So-and-So Reclining* extends beyond a painting or a poem. It forms our basic notions of life itself. Following are three basic themes of Stevens which the poet shows growing out of the mind forming unity from chaotic fact. 1. The enjoyment of the senses. 2. The discovery of love through pain. 3. The development of the individual self.

1. *The enjoyment of the senses.* We have seen in *Sunday Morning* how Stevens has turned our attention from the confusion about the myth of religion to the clarifying knowledge of the senses. The electricity of the senses is also the theme of another rather long poem, *Le Monocle de Mon Oncle.* Here, an old or middle-aged man peers through his monocle at the decay in life. "This luscious and impeccable fruit of life / Falls, it appears, of its own weight to earth." The view of death and the certain knowledge of constant change cause the man to realize how precious the "bloom" of life is. The bloom is love, and love seems to be the excitement of being alive.

> Like a dark rabbi, I
> Observed, when young, the nature of mankind,
> In lordly study. Every day, I found
> Man proved a gobbet in my mincing world.
> Like a rose rabbi, later, I pursued,
> And still pursue, the origin and course
> Of love, but until now I never knew
> That fluttering things have so distinct a shade.

It is the sense of change that wakens the man to delight more fully in the passing shapes of "fluttering things." He makes a virtue of sensuousness, just as did the lusty matron of *Sunday Morning.* Both of these people are shown to be artists in that they have molded their own shapes from the formless clay of their perceptions.

2. *The discovery of love through pain.* The finding of love through pain is simply an extension of the enjoyment of the senses through the sadness of change. The beginning of sadness, the beginning also of love, is pain. So the reflective persona of *Esthetique du Mal* sits uncomfortably under the shadow of Vesuvius, whose rumblings remind him of pain.

> He tried to remember the phrases: pain
> Audible at noon, pain torturing itself,
> Pain killing pain on the very point of pain.

In search of balm, the man rejects self-pity and the "overhuman god" whose religion fosters self-pity. Stevens rejects the comforting myths just as he did in *Sunday Morning;* and just as in that poem, Stevens here turns instead to more immediate experiences, those of human love:

> Softly let all true sympathizers come,
> Without the inventions of sorrow or the sob
> Beyond invention. Within what we permit,
> Within the actual, the warm, the near,
> So great a unity, that it is bliss,
> Ties us to those we love.

The poem then clarifies the notion that it is tragic not to exist so as to feel even the misery that leads to love. And the poem ends by celebrating both love and pain as twin tongues of the fire of life:

> The greatest poverty is not to live
> In a physical world, to feel that one's desire
> Is too difficult to tell from despair. Perhaps,
> After death, the non-physical people, in paradise,
> Itself non-physical, may, by chance, observe
> The green corn gleaming and experience
> The minor of what we feel.

Once again we see the process of creation. The apparently chaotic data of misery force the mind to re-create it into the purposefulness of love.

3. *The development of the individual self*: Since the self is a unit, it must be given its unity through some art. For most people, the old myths and religions serve that purpose. However, as we have seen before, these notions are to Stevens merely someone else's art. Therefore the man of thought and imagination must form his own answers and create his own unity. This gives rise to one of the most epigrammatic of Stevens' titles, *The Good Man Has No Shape*. In this poem Stevens says that when man was primitive, "God was his only elegance."

> Then generation by generation he grew
> Stronger and freer, a little better off.

Finally man came to a point where he formed his own "elegance." The reference seems to be to Christ whose human form or shape was unique. Then Christ was killed, but his utmost violation was the consecration by his followers that denied his humanness.

> At last the good life came, good sleep, bright fruit,
> And Lazarus betrayed him to the rest,

Who killed him, sticking feathers in his flesh
To mock him. They placed with him in his grave

Sour wine to warm him, an empty book to read;
And over it they set a jagged sign,

Epitaphium to his death, which read,
The Good Man Has No Shape, as if they knew.

"Feathers in his flesh" probably means that Christ's followers made him angelic, more than he actually was. They made him supernatural or feathered. Sour wine probably refers to the eucharist, whose supernatural expectations violate its nature and turn it sour. The wine is also life which sours when its sensual reality is denied. This denial of nature makes the book, the belief, empty.

The warning in this poem, as in *Sunday Morning*, is not to be fooled by one man's art which becomes the religion of lesser men. Stevens' injunction is for the individual to form his own *shape*. That injunction is also the theme of the ending of one of his longest poems about art, *The Man with the Blue Guitar*. Section XXI begins that idea with the following:

A substitute for all the gods:
This self, not that gold self aloft.

Other sections follow which vary the theme, and finally the next-to-last section of the poem speaks it imperatively:

Throw away the lights, the definitions,
And say of what you see in the dark

That it is this or that it is that,
But do not use the rotted names.

Again we have come full circle. Stevens' most moral injunction follows from his notion that man makes the unity of the world because its probably real creator cannot be fathomed or will not be revealed. Man is not God, but man is god-like in his ability to re-create. He must face the ragged reality, but he must also make it into his own terms. His creativity forces him to make love out of pain and excites him to form his own shape. The imagination forms the raw material of the world into art, love, and individual worth.

The point of awakening is the intersection of Projections A, B, and C.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Some Notes on F. Scott Fitzgerald

LESLIE FIEDLER

I. NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE FAILURE

THE CASE OF F. Scott Fitzgerald belongs first of all to the history of taste in our time. It is immensely difficult at the present moment to distinguish our responses to Fitzgerald's achievement from our self-congratulatory feelings about certain recent changes in our own literary standards. We are likely to overestimate his books in excessive repentance of the critical errors of the 'thirties—for having preferred Steinbeck or James T. Farrell for reasons we would no longer defend. Fitzgerald has come to seem more and more poignantly the girl we left behind—dead, to boot, before we returned to the old homestead, and therefore particularly amenable to sentimental idealization.

And so a fictionist with a "second-rate sensitive mind" (the term is Tennyson's description of himself, and evokes the tradition of late Romanticism in which Fitzgerald worked) and a weak gift for con-

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struction is pushed into the very first rank of American novelists, where it becomes hard to tell his failures from his successes. Who cares as long as the confetti flies and the bands keep playing! It is all to the good, of course, that hundreds of thousands of us require the reprinting of his books, actually read him again along with the recent Mizener biography. He had threatened for too long to remain a "case" about whom everyone merely *talks*. If we were only content with reclaiming an imperfect good writer, who achieved just once a complete artistic success, but who in every book at some point breaks through his own intolerable resolve to be charming above all and touches the truth!

But, Lord have mercy on us, we want a "great" writer. It is at once the comedy and tragedy of twentieth-century American letters that we simply cannot keep a full stock of contemporary "great novelists." In the novel, unlike recent poetry in which certain reputations have grown slowly and steadily, we have had an erratic market: reputations fantastically overpriced are in an instant deflated, and new booms are launched. From moment to moment we have the feeling that certain claims, at least, are secure, but even as we name them they shudder and fall. Who now mentions James Branch Cabell? And who can think of Dos Passos and Steinbeck without a twinge of shame for dead enthusiasms? Dreiser and Farrell find a few surly defenders—but even their granted merits seem irrelevant to our current situation. Whom have we left? Faulkner and Hemingway, and even now the stock of the latter has begun to fall; a thousand imitators reveal the weaknesses we had not seen, and the younger critics begin, to the shrill screams of Hemingway's contemporaries, the drastic revision. Into our depopulated pantheon, therefore, we impress Fitzgerald.

Who else? There are several reasons that impel the choice: we have reached the point from which the 'twenties, Fitzgerald's 'twenties, can be regarded with the maximum nostalgia; we readopt the hairdos, the songs—and the authors. We see him now as one who refused to whore after strange Marxist gods, our lonely St. Anthony, faithful to literature in the sociological desert. The versions of Fitzgerald that these estimates imply are perhaps not quite true, but they are believed in and will do. And yet the *essential* appeal of Fitzgerald is elsewhere—astonishingly enough, in his *failure*.

Mr. Schulberg in his recent novel has remarked that in America nothing fails like success; but of course the obverse is also true: among us, nothing succeeds like failure. We are, behind a show of the grossest success-worship, a nation that dreams of failure as a fulfillment. The

Christian paradox of the defeated as victor haunts our post-Christian world. None of us seems *really* to believe in the succeeding of success, though we do not know how to escape from its trap; and it has become one of the functions of our writers to supply us with vicarious failures for our second-hand redemption.

Edgar Allan Poe provides the prototype, of course: dope, whisky, the shadow of madness, poverty and early death—and Fitzgerald is the perfect modern avatar. It is the Fall not of a King, but of an Artist, the disaffected son of the middle class, of us all, that we demand to stir our pity and terror. For the great quasi-literate public, Fitzgerald is providing right now the *tragic experience:* creating, in the great amphitheater without walls of articles in *Life*, abridgments in the *Atlantic Monthly*, paragraphs in the papers, and 25-cent reprints, a debased equivalent of what the Athenian found in the *Oedipus Rex*. When any American writer refuses to live into the conventional public myth, the people remake him, as even Poe was retouched by Griswold, who invented in malice the American Writer, and as Stephen Crane was lied and vilified into the image necessary to us all.

But Fitzgerald *willed* his role as a failure, for all his paeans to success. Long before his own actual crack-up, he dreamed it, prophesied it in his stories and novels; and if one cannot read his true desire in the fictional projections, Mr. Mizener's account of the life more than confirms the intimations. Mr. Mizener's greatest merit as a biographer is that he does not cut the fabric of Fitzgerald's life to his own views, but by balancing a half-dozen partial readings of his career permits still others (including this one) that do not suggest themselves explicitly to him. Instinctively, Fitzgerald hoarded his defeats like his truest treasures: his rejection as a young man by Ginevra King, his expulsion from Princeton, the imagined attacks of tuberculosis and the real ones (a disease in which the will is all), the cutting to pieces of his prized movie script by Joe Mankiewicz—and above all, the drinking.

II. BOOZE DONE IT!

FROM THE BEGINNINGS of Western literature, there has been a tradition of the flaw as essential to the writer, but at various times there have been various notions of the ideal charismatic weakness: blindness in the most ancient days, incest in the Byronic period, homosexuality in the *fin de siècle*. But in America the flaw has been pre-eminently drunkenness, from Griswold's Poe dead in the gutters of Baltimore to

Schulberg's Halliday-Fitzgerald dying among the undergraduates at Dartmouth. It was quite another sort of culture hero, the battered John L. Sullivan, who said mournfully, "Booze done it!"; but the words make an appropriate epitaph for our typical writer.

Every writer in Fitzgerald makes his first staggering entrance loaded: McKiscoe in *Tender Is the Night*, "Four-eyes" in *Gatsby*, Wylie in *The Last Tycoon;* the profession is inseparable from the vice. It is, I suppose, because the 'twenties were the time when drinking became quite simply the American Character, or at least its public face, that Fitzgerald was so much at home in that world, unalienated from the general binge. Mr. Mizener's book makes quite clear the pathetic hollowness of Fitzgerald's claim to be a spokesman for the 'twenties in the formal sense, a kind of higher John Held, Jr.; and a quick, embarrassed rereading of *This Side of Paradise*, with its queasy panegyrics of "kissing" and "petting," reveals a writer far too naïve and principled to speak for a time without principle. And yet Fitzgerald and his audience were, until the 'twenties died, at home with each other; the American citizen as lush and the American artist as lush cried into the same beer. It was not that only Americans, or American writers, drank (there was always James Joyce, as Hemingway reminded Fitzgerald between drinks), but that for Americans it so much *mattered;* and that in the United States, before drinking could become an overwhelming habit, it had first to be forbidden. It is surely no accident that the protagonist of Fitzgerald's best book has, like his author, grown wealthy on Prohibition, the sensitive bootlegger as the last Romantic—the "great" Gatsby, for whom only the drunken writer turns out to mourn after his inevitable defeat.

The greatest drunken writer whom Fitzgerald created, however, appeared in none of his books—being, of course, Fitzgerald himself. A part of the apparent waste of Fitzgerald's life stems from his having invested most of his energy in composing himself; and his Collected Works have not been finished until ten years after his death. One cannot claim to have read him without having read *The Far Side of Paradise* or the letters and reminiscences collected in *The Crack-up.* It is the glory and the curse of the Romantic writer that his achievement cannot survive his legend without real loss. When the lives of Scott and Zelda are forgotten, or when they have become merely chronologies without the legendary distortions and pathos, his books will be less rewarding. Think of Byron, to whom his sins are as necessary as drunkenness and the madness of his wife are to Fitzgerald!

III. PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG GIRL

THE OBVERSE of the Romantic habit of living one's life as if it were a work of art is that of writing one's books as if they were autobiographies. Fitzgerald is wary in this respect, but his dodges are superficial and ineffective. In his later books, he resolutely refuses to use the writer or artist as protagonist or point-of-view character. Even in *The Last Tycoon,* where the writer Wylie is obviously the character through whom the story of Stahr *must* be told, Fitzgerald's resolve to keep the writer as character peripheral quite ruins any possibility of a coherent organization; and in the end Fitzgerald smuggles himself into the skin of Stahr and of the young girl through whom the events are seen. Nothing is gained, and a good deal is lost—organization, certainly, and consistency of characterization.

It is not by pretending that one's central character is a gangster or psychiatrist or producer that one avoids turning art into confession; it is a question of method and irony and detachment, the devices that made *Stephen Hero* into *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the devices that Fitzgerald never mastered.

Any one of Fitzgerald's novels will illustrate the point; but perhaps *Tender Is the Night* will serve best of all. Almost all the main characters (Nicole Diver, the female lead, is of course based on Zelda), whatever their outsides, turn out to be F. Scott Fitzgerald. Dick Diver, the protagonist, who seems from a distance the assured aristocrat, the obverse of the author, reveals on the first close-up the Irish lilt, the drunkenness, the tortured sensibility that are Fitzgerald's. The pretentious novelist (enter drunk, to be sure!), Albert McKiscoe, is Scott in caricature, his social insecurity, his pretenses, even the early success he feared and hated. Abe North, faintly disguised as a musician, is Ring Lardner; but Ring Lardner was Fitzgerald's favorite *alter ego*, in whom he liked to see the image of his own doom (exit drunk, of course!). One could do a marvelous movie with all these parts played by the same actor—a different stance, different costuming, and as the camera moves close: the same face.

Even the young moving-picture actress, Rosemary Hoyt, turns out to be a version of the author. She is Irish (always a clue), full of embarrassment and guilty pride at a too-sudden success, and quite indeterminate in her sex. Indeed, the book is shot through with a thematic playing with the ambiguity of sex: Dick Diver makes his first entrance in a pair of black lace panties, and homosexuals, male and female, haunt the climaxes of the novel. "Economically," Rosemary's mother tells her at one point, "you're a boy, not a girl." Economically! One recalls the portrait of Fitzgerald as the most beautiful showgirl in the Triangle Show.

I had felt all this before reading in Mr. Mizener's biography that in *The World's Fair*, an abandoned book from whose fragments the first part of *Tender Is the Night* is made, Rosemary was indeed a boy, who was to kill his mother according to the original plot. It has been observed by Malcolm Cowley that Fitzgerald has always a double vision of himself, as outsider and insider at once, the man of the world and the bumpkin gawking at him; but it has not been remarked that at the end of his writing career the outsider had become defined as the Young Girl, a kind of anima figure, desiring hopelessly the older man who is *also* Fitzgerald, himself double: in the eyes of the girl all power and glamor, in his own view aging and corrupt or at the point of death.

In his last two novels, the same relationship appears, and the same sort of character as narrator, a portrait of the artist as a breathless young girl, still virgin though not without experience. Each time the affair ends in a deflowering without love and an eventual desertion, Diver-Fitzgerald abandoning Rosemary-Fitzgerald for Nicole-Zelda, and Stahr-Fitzgerald leaving Cecilia-Fitzgerald for Kathleen; the protagonists choosing both times that Other Woman by whom Fitzgerald symbolizes the lure of death and destruction which is stronger even than self-love.

This constant impulse to confuse himself with his characters destroys first of all the consistency of the people in his books; but, even worse, it leads Fitzgerald into an indulgence in self-pity, which is the grossest manifestation of his prevailing sentimentality. He is sentimental about everything—Princeton, the First World War, sex (egregiously!), Skull and Bones, Gold Star Mothers—but especially about his own plight. Everywhere in his work there is a failure of irony and detachment that amounts finally to a failure of intelligence, an indulgence of the "second-rate sensitive mind."

Like most American writers, Fitzgerald had to work without an accepted tradition to sustain him or received standards against which to measure himself. All his life, he moved uncertainly between the demands of his own erratic sensibility and a desire to please a great, undefined audience—to be loved by everybody. Like one of his own epicene coquettes, he postured and flirted with all comers, trying to cling meanwhile to a virginity which became more and more a technicality. To be wanted and admired, he was willing to seem to say less than he meant, to appear merely chic; so that it is still possible to read even his best books with no understanding and much pleasure. How could he ever find time to learn how to put a novel together with skill! All his life, point-of-view baffled him, and he was forced to make his transitions with such awkward links as: "To resume Rosemary's point of view, it should be said . . . or "This is Cecilia taking up the story . . ."

IV. WHAT TERRIBLE AND GOLDEN MYSTERY . . .

And yet . . . there is always the style of the details, the glow and motion of the close of *Gatsby* or the opening of *Tender Is the Night,* those wonderful approaches and fadeouts. There is always the naïve honesty or reminiscence, the embarrassing rightness of his adolescents. And there is the supreme negative virtue: Fitzgerald's refusal to swap his own lived sentimentalities for the mass sentimentalities of social protest that swamp the later Hemingway. Even the compulsive theme of the *femme fatale,* the All-American banality of woman as destroyer, is capable of subtleties forever beyond the "proletarian novel." When Fitzgerald treats social themes he is absurd; surely there appears in the overrated fragment, *The Last Tycoon,* the least convincing Communist in American fiction. But he resisted the temptation to end *Tender Is the Night* with Dick Diver sending his kids off to the Soviet Union, a close that might well have won him the plaudits he so needed in 1934.

But beyond all this, one feels in his work a great theme, however elusive and imperfectly realized. It is not love, though love is superficially everywhere in his writing; nor is it Europe, though he lived there and set one book and many stories in the expatriate background. Though he was educated in Catholic schools, it is not religion. His books have no religious insights, only religious décor—the obsessive metaphor of the "ruined priest," a theatrical making of the cross to close a book, a belated Aubrey-Beardsley-ish priest. The sensibility of the Catholic in America becomes, like everything else, puritan: the devil, self-consciously introduced in *This Side of Paradise,* shrinks to an evil aura around a tart's head. There is in Fitzgerald no profound sense of evil or sin, only of guilt; and no gods except the Rich.

The Rich—there is the proper subject matter of Fitzgerald, as everyone has perceived: their difference from the rest of us, and the meanings of that difference. That "other woman" who is death is also wealth; the girl, like Daisy, with gold in her voice. Of course, the wealthy in Fitzgerald are not *real,* but that is precisely the point. Whether in declared fantasy like "A Diamond as Big as the Ritz" or in nominally realistic novels, they resemble veritable millionaires as little as Natty Bumppo resembles an actual frontiersman. But they are, at least—like that Cooper character and unlike the nasty rich in proletarian novels—myths rather than platitudes, viable to the imagination.

It is not just snobbishness that drew Fitzgerald to the rich, the boy from St. Paul dreaming his life long of an imagined Princeton. In all his writing, one senses Fitzgerald in search of an American equivalent to *les grands*, the aristocracy to whom the French writers were able to turn in their reversion from the grubby bourgeois world. Was there anywhere, in America or among Americans abroad, a native aristocracy to whom "style" was a goal and a dream? It is not money getters, but spenders, to whom Fitzgerald turned in his search for allies, out of a sense that the squandering of unearned money was an art, like writing, that squandering of an unearned talent; and that among the very rich there might be a perpetual area of freedom, like that in which the artist momentarily feels himself in the instant of creative outpouring.

The world where a penny saved is a penny earned is the world of anti-art. The lower middle class in particular, Fitzgerald felt, were the enemies of style. He wanted a class that knows how to *use* writers, or at least desires a kind of life in which the imagination would have a chance to live. It was a hopeless dream, and in the end Fitzgerald learned two things: first, that the rich, whatever the quality of their living, regard the artist not as an ally but as a somewhat amusing *arriviste;* and, second, that to live the life of high style is to remain a moral child, who destroys whatever does not suit his whim. To be "rich," in the sense he dreamed, is to refuse responsibility, to deny fate, to try (as in the terrible scene toward the close of "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz") to bribe God. There is implicit in such a life a doom as absolute as its splendor, and in this sense alone the career of the very rich is like that of the artist.

It is a vision atrocious and beautiful enough to be true, and it survives in Fitzgerald's work, despite the incoherence and sentimentality, with the force of truth. It is fitting that our chronicler of the rich be our prophet of failure. To those who plead that Fitzgerald could not face up to life and success, it can be said that at least he kept faith with death and defeat.

The Theme and the Narrator of The Great Gatsby

Thomas A. Hanzo

OF THE TWO MOST PROMINENT CAREERS which figure in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Jay Gatsby's is a variation of the American success story, and Nick Carraway's is an example, differing from others in locale and therefore also in implication, of the provincial American's career in a society more sophisticated than his own.[1] Fitzgerald was able to combine the types through the convention of the first person narration, but Nick's fate has been generally ignored in detailed criticisms of the book. Gatsby and his dream, in these interpretations, are Fitzgerald's subjects, and through them is seen his ultimate subject, "fundamentally, the heterogeneous nature of American culture," as a recent article has it.[2] Lionel Trilling has suggested a use of this conception by Fitzgerald which, by a slight distortion, I should like to develop for my own purposes: "He [Fitzgerald] exaggerated the idea of society and his dependence upon it in order, we may say, to provide a field for the activity of his conscience, for the trial of his self." [3] Gatsby surely represents one of Fitzgerald's trials of self, an incomplete one, however, in contrast with the less dramatic experience of Nick Carraway. Fitzgerald's intention cannot be clarified, nor the significance of his achievement grasped, without our sharing with Nick the trial of his self and the

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[1] The Americans of Henry James' novels are examples of the type; James dealt, according to Yvor Winters, "with the American, unrooted from his native usages, and confronted with the alien usages of a subtle and ancient society." "Maule's Well, or Henry James and the Relation of Morals to Manners," *In Defense of Reason* (New York, 1947), p. 312.

[2] W. M. Frohock, "Morals, Manners, and Scott Fitzgerald," *Southwest Review*, XL (Summer, 1955), p. 224.

[3] "Fitzgerald Plain," *The New Yorker*, 26 : 4 (February 3, 1951), p. 80.

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activity of his conscience in that society of which Gatsby is only the most notable part.

When Carraway's voice introduces and concludes the action, Fitzgerald makes us conscious of the narrator, whose role may first be outlined by a comparison in which he acts the foil to Gatsby. We may begin with a difference which Fitzgerald would rightly have approved: Gatsby is rich, Nick relatively poor. Gatsby is alone, mysterious, obsessed; Nick makes friends easily, his life is ordinary, and he is quite sane. Gatsby is without conscience except perhaps where Daisy is concerned, and Nick subjects every act and motive to the scrutiny of a lively moral sense. Gatsby learns nothing in the course of the novel, or at least until his doom has been secured, for he decided too early what he wanted and strove for it with a determination which subordinated all other demands. Although Nick is thirty years old in the summer of 1922, the time of the novel, he is still an adolescent when he settles on Long Island, with an adolescent's memory of the war, and he comes to New York to enter the bond-selling business chiefly because other restless young men are doing the same thing. Nick has no purposes, he thinks of no powers to realize, and only very gradually, not until sometime in 1924, does he come to understand what his New York interlude has meant.

I cannot presume that this view of Carraway's part in the novel constitutes a revolutionary interpretation of *The Great Gatsby*. Arthur Mizener, whose analysis of *The Great Gatsby* has appeared in several forms and is undoubtedly the most widely distributed, approves Fitzgerald's choice of form and recognizes the structural importance of the first-person convention: "By means of this narrator he [Fitzgerald] was able to focus his story." [4] But the novel is the story of Gatsby, "a poor boy from the Middle West," and when Mr. Mizener classifies *The Great Gatsby* as a "tragic pastoral," it is Gatsby who illustrates the difference between the "simple virtue" of the West, and the "sophistication" and "corruption" of the East.[5] The moral distance between the two localities may be measured in more profound ways if we take Nick Carraway as our example and his sensibility and intelligence as the recognizable

[4] "F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Poet of Borrowed Time," *Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction*, p. 295. Mr. Mizener, an acute reader of Fitzgerald, is well aware of Nick's moral involvement in the action of *The Great Gatsby*. I can hope to complement his analysis by a fullness of treatment he did not judge necessary.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 296.

determinants which inform the story with its meaning. Such a reading of *The Great Gatsby* must also be compared, and at several points, with the interpretation of R. W. Stallman, who, in "Gatsby and the Hole in Time," characterizes Nick as a "defunct arch-priest" and regards the notion that Nick is to be seen as the "moral center of the book" as possible only to the "duped reader." [6] Fitzgerald's intention that we understand clearly what happens to Carraway may be appreciated in the first part of the first chapter. The novel's extraordinary economy requires, at least in its best parts, an attentive reading of detail, and since there are barely two pages in the first section, a close following of the text will not be intolerable.

Nick Carraway begins his story with the recollection that his father advised him to reserve his judgment of others because they may not have had the same "advantages." Nick's tolerance has made him the confidant of some and the victim of others, but to preserve his caution he has always reminded himself that "a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth." Carraway's father has warned him about the difficulties of moral judgment, a difficulty originating in circumstances of origin and inheritance. But conduct, Nick observes, must be principled in some fashion. There is a "limit" to toleration. "Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or on the wet marshes, but after a certain point I don't care what it's founded on." That is, while it may be impossible to fix moral responsibility or to determine derelictions from that responsibility, Nick insists that action reveal some principle and that toleration does not permit indifference. His criticism of the standards and conduct of his Long Island friends has tired him, he concludes; he can wish the world "to stand at a sort of moral attention forever"; he wants no more "riotous" glimpses into the human heart. We should be too hasty if we condemned Nick for an unhealthy curiosity or for pompous self-righteousness. The tone of his narrative is never offensively positive, and we shall see that what may appear to be a peculiar form of pride is actually a serious kind of candor. Nick considers not only his friends, but himself as well. He tells us plainly what should interest us in his tale, and he introduces us to a period of his own life in which he is not entirely blameless and neutral. The quality of plainness, the device of direct revelation, has appeared to R. W. Stallman as the mask of the hypocrite, who is betrayed, symbolically, by his "irregular lawn." [7] To the contrary, Nick's irregularities of behavior, his carelessness, do not escape his judgment; he does not grow more confused but learns to see more clearly what Eastern society and morality are and how he has been corrupted by them.

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[6] *Modern Fiction Studies,* I (November, 1955), p. 7. [7] *Ibid.*

Nick prepares us for his personal involvement in the action by his next words, when he reveals his own origins, or his reasons for thinking that he had "advantages." He came from a family of "prominent, well-to-do people" who have lived in "this Middle Western city for three generations." They have enjoyed commercial success, act together as a family, and regard the decisions and conduct of their relatives with grave concern. They have inherited the moral seriousness of their Scottish ancestors, sustain their business and social position as a manifestation of their moral superiority, and have passed down to their heirs a strong "sense of the fundamental decencies."

The narrator's part complicates the action. We are expected to realize that what we are told comes to us through his peculiar agency, and therefore—to complete an obvious matter—our knowledge of the narrator will establish the limits of our knowledge of the whole action. Fitzgerald understood these limitations and in the direct, economical way of *The Great Gatsby* engages the reader at once in the particular interests which the novel should arouse. Immediately after his introductory remarks, Carraway narrates his first visit to the Buchanan household, where he delivers an exact description of a moneyed and corrupt Eastern society in Daisy's despair and in Tom's adulteries.

Here Nick meets Jordan Baker, a professional golf player who has succumbed to the ennui of the frantic search for novelty and excitement to which she and others of her post-war generation had devoted themselves. She is also a persistent and obvious liar, and Nick soon perceives this fault. Yet he is interested in her, though exactly how intimate they become is only suggested by a scene in which Jordan easily accepts Nick's first attentions. Her unconcern for any standards beyond those of a frank self-indulgence is evidence enough that the two have become lovers. This relationship is Nick's most personal involvement in the dissolution which Jordan represents, and the perception of his share in a common guilt comes with his initial revulsion to his summer's experience, directly after Myrtle Wilson's death. He is suddenly disgusted by the vicious and now violent life about him, but even in his new wisdom, his passion for Jordan has not been completely destroyed. In his last conversation with her, he can feel that he might be "making a mistake" by ending their affair and finally that he is "half in love with her." We learn most about them at this point in Jordan's accusation that Nick is a "bad driver." He is not the person she thought—not what he pretended to be—and she says, "It was careless of me to make such a wrong guess. I thought you were rather an honest, straightforward person. I thought it was your secret pride." Nick answers: "I'm thirty. I'm five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor." It was Nick's pride to feel that he could accept Jordan on her own terms, with her cynicism and her irresponsibility, and yet that he could escape the consequences of that acceptance. But what was subdued or ignored has now erupted, with Gatsby murdered and with Daisy and Tom exposed in their terrible selfishness. It can no longer be honorable for Nick to maintain the pretense that nothing serious is involved in his affair with Jordan. Nick was dishonest because he acted as though he brought no other standards of conduct to judge their liaison with than those which Jordan's hedonism impose; and it is now plain, in his disgust and self-recrimination, that Nick has in fact deceived Jordan. She accuses him of having thought of her all along as he does now, when he has given her up. She is right, of course, and Nick, who is (he tells us) the most honest man he knows, admits his twice-compounded duplicity, a duplicity analyzed in a similar way by R. W. Stallman. But he does not accept Nick's understanding of his personal responsibility. When Jordan "calls his bluff," as Stallman puts it, the effect is to make public Nick's own shame, so that, far from being "identified" with Jordan,[8] Nick is separated from her and from her society. He can no longer lie, and he leaves the East, without honor perhaps, but with a new-found vision of his own guilt.

There is another complication in Nick's discovery of his error. Even Jordan Baker, he says, came from the West. All the Westerners —Tom, Daisy, Gatsby, Jordan, and Nick—"possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life." Though the rest may have become more acclimated to the atmosphere of Eastern society than Nick, none is entirely at ease. None can rid himself of that "sense of the fundamental decencies," however attenuated it may have become, which their origins have given them. None can finally be comfortable in the hedonism cultivated by the Eastern representatives of his generation, or at least by those with money and enough intelligence to be disillusioned by the war. After his revulsion, Nick returns to the comparatively rigid morality of his ancestral West and to its embodiment in the manners of Western society. He alone of all the Westerners can return, since the others have suffered, apparently beyond any conceiv-

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

able redemption, a moral degeneration brought on by their meeting with that form of Eastern society which developed during the twenties.

Nick makes another commitment to the life he at last rejects, a commitment that includes what we should ordinarily take to be his humiliating part in the affair between Gatsby and Daisy. Nick is used and knows it, but his attachment to Gatsby leads him to make another important discovery, however vague it may remain in some respects, about the nature of morality itself. We should ask: What does Nick think of Gatsby? And why? And again a passage at the beginning of the novel will reveal the essential information.

After Nick has explained that there must be limits to his toleration, he excepts Gatsby from his general reaction, "Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn." "There was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life. . . ." Gatsby had "an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness." Gatsby, Nick says, "turned out all right at the end," and it was not he who drew Nick's scorn, but the "foul dust" which "floated in the wake of his dreams." We learn gradually about Gatsby's dream: about the events of his early life and his peculiar training, about his obsession, about his impersonal—indeed, royal—view of his own personality, about the reality which his vision of the perfect life must have seemed to him. Now, the capacities which Nick admires are the capacities of will: a tremendous energy to accomplish certain purposes, and a self-imposed delusion which makes those purposes meaningful. The delusion is the vision of Gatsby's life with Daisy, and the purposes are his need for money and social position to make himself worthy of her. Gatsby differs from the others of his time by virtue of these capacities. Whereas the behavior of the Eastern rich, the racketeers, and the Westerners who adopt Eastern ways is restricted and debased by the selfish motives of personal and sensual gratification, Gatsby acts for a good which he conceives, almost absurdly, as being beyond personal interest. Gatsby's last heroism in protection of the mistress of his dream confirms Nick's judgment. Gatsby does turn out all right, while Tom and Daisy sit comfortably at their family table, bound in their private safety. If Gatsby, as Nick says at the end, "felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream," his sacrifice has already been made and his life consummated. He had found a way to live as men had once lived, with a purpose and a meaning which transcended personal fate.

Nick accepts the probability that Gatsby himself realized the insufficiency of his dream. The vision was only Gatsby's and his goal only a personal one, if somehow ennobled, as Nick sees it, by Gatsby's strength of will. Further, Gatsby is a fraud. The structure of appearance erected to impress Daisy is founded on some kind of illegal traffic which only repels her, so that she is lost to Gatsby even before the accident of Myrtle's death. Nor is Nick ever in any doubt that Gatsby has valued only the tawdry and the vain. He is left at last with Gatsby's morality, or rather Gatsby's capacity to live according to a morality, his "romantic readiness." It is this ability which Nick feels that he and the others lack, presumably because of historical circumstance.

That, at least, is what I take to be the meaning of the last words of the novel, on the night when Nick left West Egg forever, and the "inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams. . . ." In Nick's day, I conclude, such dreams no longer correspond to any reality.[9] They present no real challenges, and only disillusion, even for a man like Gatsby, can ensue, if a lesser dream like Gatsby's is accepted. When Gatsby "picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock," Nick continues, "he did not know that it [his dream] was already behind him." A last contrast may now be made clear between Gatsby and Nick, Gatsby who thought he could remake the past and Nick who knew that it was irretrievably lost and that more than Gatsby's dream was gone with it.

Nick's discovery is that the power of will without the direction of intelligence is a destructive power, that there must be some real end beyond the satisfaction of private desire—however desire may be exalted—to justify the expenditure of life. But he believes too that, except for the anachronistic and fatal instance of Gatsby, the time when such ends could have existed is now done. We can only "beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

Fitzgerald represents the past both as a loss and as a source of strength. It is the record of such deeds springing from such dedication as cannot now be expected, and in the Carraway family tradition, it confers a discipline and standards which, even as survivals of an old morality, may still produce better conduct than Nick witnesses on Long Island. Nick's honesty and his conception of a good existing beyond selfish ends may be only heirlooms, he realizes, honored for sentimental reasons, but they have been given a contemporary, limited reality in his own life. Nick includes his morality in his description of a graceless modern age and reduces his claims on it to the satisfaction of individual conscience. He has no real alternative—in the sense that it may be said to be available to other men—to the selfishness he condemns in Tom or Jordan. He does not speak authoritatively. But while his voice is subdued, it is never unsure. Nick's judgments are firm because he assumes that evil may be clearly enough determined. His hopes are modest because he regards the good only as a private, incommunicable possession. He can assert his criticism and judgment of Eastern society, including the revelation of his own guilt, but he affirms no morality of his own, accepting the circumstances of his birthright rather than affirming its permanent values. That Nick proposes to "save the world by regimenting it," [10] as R. W. Stallman has it, because he wants the world to be at a "sort of moral attention forever" is a reading which attributes this understandable reaction, this moral inertia, to a rigidity which Nick's private convictions could not support. Fitzgerald—so far as we can discern from the tenor of his narration—expects to meet no disagreement with his perception of evil, but assumes that he and his readers will all be perplexed to find a common good. This combination of conviction and diffidence produces the extraordinary contrast between the effects of cryptic description (as in Gatsby's youthful regimen) and of ideographic device (as in Dr. Eckleburg's eyes) and the quiet and deprecated role of the narrator.

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[9] Edwin S. Fussell suggests that the dream of the Dutch sailors was also "unreal" and relies on the associations of the word *pandered* to develop this theme of the failure of romantic wonder, the quest for youth and success. "Fitzgerald's Brave New World," *ELH*, XIX (1952), p. 298. The interpretation may be allowed, but only, I think, if the old dream be regarded as the "last and greatest." Gatsby's dream was, to repeat, an illusion.

Such an interpretation credits Fitzgerald with a moral seriousness which has, with reason, been challenged. With R. W. Stallman, W. M. Frohock finds Nick "short on moral perspective" [11] and Fitzgerald's style catching the "feeling of things" but combined with a "romantic inability to interpret them." [12] Edwin S. Fussell, on the other hand, defines the story of *The Great Gatsby* and other works as "the work of the imagination in the New World"; [13] its failure to discover an objective for the romantic capacity is an American tragedy.[14] Failure, of course, attends Gatsby's career as inexorably as the current which sweeps the boats back into the past, but the failure must be experienced through Nick's moral sense, and his difficulties must be judged not as a lack of moral perspective but as the occasion for moral action of a peculiarly limited sort. Such a reading of Nick's role restores the emphasis which Fitzgerald gave to that moral judgment (developing awkwardly, it is true) which gives the novel its very form. And it may cast some light on the question of what Fitzgerald's early Catholic training may have meant to him: [15] a training which left him with the means to analyze and judge post-war American society even while he had lost the convictions which might have produced something more positive than Nick's retreat to the West.

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[10] "Gatsby and the Hole in Time," p. 7.

[11] "Morals, Manners, and Scott Fitzgerald," p. 227.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

[13] "Fitzgerald's Brave New World," p. 291.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

The Great Gatsby is not a melodrama about Jay Gatsby, but a definition of the senses in which Nick understands the word "great." Its subject is an American morality. It is explored historically through the conflict between the surviving Puritan morality of the West and the post-war hedonism of the East; topically, through characteristic manifestations of American money values; formally and most significantly, through the personal history of a young American provincial whose moral intelligence is the proper source of our understanding and whose career, in the passage from innocence to revaluation, dramatizes the possibility and mode of a moral sanction in contemporary America.

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[15] See the query by Professor H. W. Hausermann in *Modern Fiction Studies,* II, 2 (May, 1956), pp. 81–82.

Ernest Hemingway

The Hero and the Code

PHILIP YOUNG

> I did not care what it was all about. All I wanted to know was how to live in it.
>
> THE SUN ALSO RISES

AYEE!’ suddenly screamed the lieutenant,” in a story of Hemingway’s called “A Natural History of the Dead.”

“You have blinded me! You have blinded me!”
“Hold him tight,” said the doctor. “He is in much pain. Hold him very tight.”

As doctors are not always available, and are often of little use, holding

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tight against pain is an exercise which was to become important to the Hemingway hero. Considerably broadened and elaborated, the effort to hold tight developed into what is known as the Hemingway "code." But the hero is still only a sketch, and before one is in the best position to understand the code, there are some more stories in Hemingway's "first forty-nine"—in addition to the Nick ones—which fill out the main body of that man a good deal. These are "I"-stories, written in the first person. None of them contains anything that basically conflicts with the outline already given of Adams; several of them do deepen, broaden, and clarify the pattern that has been working itself out. We have already seen one of these, for the "Author's Introduction" to *In Our Time* appears in Hemingway's collected stories as "On the Quai at Smyrna." This was the sketch in which appear the women who will not give up their dead babies, and, among other things, the mules with broken forelegs drowning in the shallow water—pictures hard for the author to get rid of, apparently, since he uses them twice again in *Death in the Afternoon*. This brief piece was already significant as a forecast, because "I got so I dreamed about things," which is of course what was to happen to Nick.

That this "I" *is* Nick becomes perfectly apparent in the war story called "Now I Lay Me" which appeared in *Men Without Women*. Here the "I" says he cannot sleep unless he has a light, as Nick could not in "A Way You'll Never Be," and although still in uniform he is not in the fighting, as before. If there is any doubt that this is Nick it disappears when, remembering his parents as he tries to occupy himself on a sleepless night, he hears his father call him by that name.

The story itself presents the picture of the man who cannot sleep "for thinking," and Nick tells of the many ways he has of occupying his mind harmlessly on these bad nights, the principal one of which is to reconstruct trout streams he has fished. In terms which clearly identify this part of the story with the trip to "Big Two-Hearted River," Hemingway tells how he pictures this fishing. And thus we suspect again that we were right when we saw that fishing trip as conducted against a background of escape and terror, that it was taken as a device to keep Nick from going crazy, for that is its clearly stated function here. The swamp he could not enter is present again, too; this time it is a place where he runs out of bait and has to cut up one of the trout he caught, to use pieces of it to catch other trout with. This, like the wounded hyena in *Green Hills of Africa* which eats its own intestines, is a cannibalism which Hemingway does not approve: the swamp is a "bad place" again.

Then Nick remembers scenes from his childhood (in which the doctor's wife comes off poorly again) and he tries to pray for his parents. However, when he is very badly off he fails at this. Then he has a conversation with an Italo-American named John; we learn that Nick has been wounded twice and that he is now a lieutenant. John decides that it is "worry" that keeps Nick awake all night: "You ought to get married, Signor Tenente. Then you wouldn't worry." Signor Tenente suspects that the problem is not so simple and he ends thinking somewhat wryly of John: "He was very certain about marriage and knew it would fix up everything."

"In Another Country," also from *Men Without Women*, is another first-person-Nick story. It is moving as a story, and is interesting for the way in which it points two directions in the development of the hero. Looking backward, it deals with his physical recuperation in Milan from the second of what have now become two separate woundings. The story has to do with a fellow patient in a hospital, a wounded major whose young wife has just died suddenly. The major gives the hero the reverse of the advice he got from John above: "A man must not marry. . . . If he is to lose everything, he should not place himself in a position to lose that." Nick is still unwell, but—and here the story points forward—for once Hemingway is not concerned so much with Nick alone. It is the major's pain that the story is about; the hero's wounds have been established, and there are now two casualties. This points to *The Sun Also Rises*, where a whole "lost generation" is wounded as Jake (Nick) is wounded, and even to *A Farewell to Arms* where Catherine Barkley is, just as Brett Ashley was in the former novel, a woman completely unsettled by the fact that she had a former lover die in the war under terrible circumstances. The pattern thus is broadening for a while, and what was the history of Nick becomes—loosely speaking—the history of a war generation. This story presents, too, the same picture of Milan to be found in *A Farewell to Arms*—*In Einem Andern Land* was the title for the German edition of that novel. Unless one knows the origin of this title its point is lost. In the story it is a brutal allusion to the major's bereavement, and in the novel it was—in the German—an even more terrible commentary. Catherine Barkley, everyone remembers, had an idyllic and very moving love affair with Lt. Henry in the novel; they lived together in Italy and in Switzerland, out of wedlock, until she died in childbirth. The allusion is to Marlowe's *Jew of Malta:*

> Thou hast committed—
> Fornication: but that was in another country,
> And, besides, the wench is dead.

Another new development turns up in a story from the same *Men Without Women* called "An Alpine Idyll." The tale is again told in the first person and returns, very likely, to the skiing trip Nick was on in "Cross Country Snow." Again the story is utterly without a "point" if not seen in the context of the other stories. Nick and a friend named John are drinking before dinner in a Swiss inn and they hear the tale of a Swiss peasant whose wife (whom he loved) had died some months before. The peasant kept her body in his woodshed all winter, waiting for the earth to thaw before digging her grave. Every night he cut wood in this shed, and

> "When I started to use the big wood she was stiff and I put her up against the wall. Her mouth was open and when I came into the shed at night to cut up the big wood, I hung the lantern from it."

This is the pattern of "The Killers" again, and again the rest of the story—and its focus—centers on the responses of the listeners. A change in these responses is the point: Nick is hardening a little. When the story is over he is silent. John says, "How about eating?" Nick says, "You order," and talks on for a moment with the innkeeper about the peasant. Where his reaction to the incident in "The Killers" was a horrified inability even "to think about it," and a desire to get completely out of that town, he is now not so sensitive. John repeats impatiently, "Say . . . how about eating?" Nick replies, "All right," and the story ends. A shell is growing over the wound to protect it a little; by 1940 the defense will be nearly impenetrable.

The "I" of these stories is Nick Adams; it is also possible to see correspondences between Nick Adams and Ernest Hemingway, the man who for a long time after his wounding in Italy in 1917 could not sleep with the light out. A glance at the briefest paragraph biographies which exist of the author would convince most people of this; the last of the Nick stories, "Fathers and Sons" from *Winner Take Nothing*, is itself convincing enough. This story, with its title presumably from Turgenev, presents to us a relatively placid thirty-eight-year-old Nick, who is driving in a car with his son. Nick is thinking about his father, the doctor (who is described precisely as photographs represent Dr. Hemingway), and specifically he is thinking about the man's death. (Hemingway's father died suddenly in 1928.) This death is very troubling to Nick; it was violent and unpleasant, and "he could not write about it yet, although he would." We now get our first real insight into how Hemingway writes, and why—among other reasons—he is a writer:

> Nick had loved him very much and for a long time. Now, knowing how it had all been, even remembering the earliest times before things had gone badly was not good remembering.

Here then is another instance of violence that is "not good remembering"—"the handsome job the undertaker had done on his father's face had not blurred in his mind." Such scars are permanent, and if time will not take the soreness from them, writing "fiction" will, and it is the only way, apparently, he can purge himself of the image that bothers him. Literature, thought to be in some way cathartic for its audience, becomes here supreme catharsis for its creator:

> If he wrote it he could get rid of it. He had gotten rid of many things by writing them. But it was still too early for that.

Readers had to wait until *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (where Robert Jordan is to explain carefully and at length what is the matter here) for it to be no longer too early for Hemingway to get rid of this unpleasant piece of his past, but his method is already apparent: the things which have happened to Nick which are "not good remembering" he has been writing away in his stories. That he has had some success with this treatment is suggested by the composure which—most of the time—the hero as Jordan is able to maintain.

In the "Fathers and Sons" story the author plays subtly with the complexities of the relationships between generations—Nick's relationship to his father and to his son. Just as the doctor taught his son to hunt so Nick is teaching his; and just as the doctor was not much help with other problems, Nick cannot communicate either. Nick remembers what he learned from an Indian girl named Trudy—a reasonable change from the "Prudie" of "Ten Indians," which would have inappropriate connotations now:

> "You think we make a baby?"
> "I don't think so," he said.
> "Make plenty baby what the hell."

But when Nick's son wants to know what the Ojibway Indians were like Nick can only tell him "It's hard to say." ("Could you say she did first what no one has ever done better?") Also the boy causes trouble by wanting to visit his grandfather's grave, a place he has never been. This is precisely what Nick does not want to think about, but his son is insistent and the story ends with the father giving in: "I can see we'll have to go." There is the merest suggestion of defeat in this; Nick is failing as his father had failed, and the present must acknowledge the past.

It is pretty clear, then, that Nick Adams has much in common with Ernest Hemingway. This is not to say that he "is" Hemingway. He is, rather, a projection of certain kinds of problems Hemingway is deeply concerned to write about, and write out. Nick is a special kind of mask.

But there are masks which do not disguise or conceal very much, and some of them, like the theatrical masks of ancient Greece, actually serve to identify character and even to reveal it. These are odd distortions indeed in that they are really clarifications. By selection among the possibilities of personality, and by emphasis of some few of its features, they expose as well as hide, disclose as well as cover. Nick Adams is such a mask, for while he presents to the world a face that is not exactly Hemingway's, he also projects chiefly that one set of problems, revolving around the wound, that is the best aid in our recognition of Hemingway. Thus Nick is a simplification, and to that extent a distortion, of the actual complex personality, but is also a kind of revelation.

In much the same way, the adventures which Hemingway has related are not always wholly and strictly autobiographical, for literature does not work with life in quite that way. But investigation shows that actually many of the stories about Nick are very literal translations of some of the most important events in Hemingway's own life, and that remarkably little has been changed in the telling. Indeed it would be hard to think of even an "autobiographical writer" (like Thomas Wolfe, for instance) who has given a more exact account of his own experience and of his own personality in the guise of prose fiction.

Obviously something was needed to bind the wounds these experiences had made in that personality, and for that reason there is another "I" in the Hemingway short stories, a minor figure who is a kind of spectator or reporter. This man is not Hemingway, is not the hero, and is not even a center of interest. Instead he observes a man, not the hero either, who in importance rates second only to the hero himself. This man changes form—his profession and even his nationality—much more than the hero ever will, but he is still a consistent character in that he always introduces and exemplifies a theme in the author's work that has rightly been made a good deal of. This is the Hemingway "code"—a "grace under pressure." It is made of the controls of honor and courage which in a life of tension and pain make a man a man and distinguish him from the people who follow random impulses, let down their hair, and are generally messy, perhaps cowardly, and without inviolable rules for how to live holding tight.

This code is very important because the "code hero," as he might be called, presents a solution to the problems of Nick Adams, of the true "Hemingway hero," and for Hemingway it is about the only solution. He finds this code operating among various sporting figures, and he has written several short stories the intention of which is to formulate the basic principles of the code by illustrating it in action. These stories deal as is logical for a man broken from respectability, with such persons of disrepute as a fixed prizefighter and a crooked gambler who, since they have the code, are admired by the man who created them.

As Hemingway once put it, "There is honor among pickpockets and honor among whores. It is simply that the standards differ." What Hemingway is thinking of becomes most clear in a story like "Fifty Grand," which presents this honor-and-courage-among-thieves concept in pristine form. Here, as in some other stories, the reportorial "I" is part of the retinue which surrounds a prizefighter named Jack. This welterweight (who has passed his prime, knows he is going to lose his championship, does not want to fight any more, is lonesome for his wife and daughters, and needs money) bets fifty thousand dollars on his opponent. But he has been double-crossed by some gamblers who were party to this arrangement, and in the fight, as he is well on his way to successful defeat, he is viciously fouled by his opponent. If he succumbs to the low blow, which has him in the most intense and debilitating pain, he will win the fight on the basis of the obvious misdeed of the challenger. This would be to lose fifty thousand dollars and to go back on his part in the swindle; it would be dishonorable. And so he denies he has been fouled, makes the supreme effort, and sticks it out until he has fouled the challenger into writhing submission. Thus he loses the fight, wins his bet, establishes his courage and maintains his honor.

Here is the reverse of the wealthy homosexual fighter in "Mother of a Queen" (who lets the bones of his mother be thrown into the public bone heap, and will not take offense when "I" insults him in every manner he can think of). This, Hemingway seems to be saying flatly in "Fifty Grand," is life and the way to live in it. These are the conditions of life, which is a highly compromising affair, and a man can be a man only by making a deal with it, and then sticking to his bargain if it kills him.

But it is a mistake to think of this man as the "Hemingway hero"; he is rather an illustration of qualities which are essential to that legend. It is a mistake because it confuses and blurs the clear picture Hemingway has been presenting. This is the same confusion that mistakes the hero, as practically all readers have done, for the outlaw Harry Morgan of *To Have and Have Not*. Actually, both this fighter and Morgan represent the man with the code, who is another man entirely. Sometimes the real hero talks like the code hero, but the distinction between them can always be made, and to consider this prizefighter, or Manuel ("The Undefeated" bullfighter), or the pirate Morgan as the Hemingway hero not only blurs and confuses what Hemingway makes fairly clear, but also and directly brings about a thoroughly erroneous misconception of that man. Too, it is to fail to see that actually Hemingway has, since 1924, been writing out the story of one man who is based on himself. The real hero is the protagonist who was up in Michigan, and was wounded while fighting as an American in the Italian army, who lived and wrote fiction in Paris; he is the generic Nick Adams. All the proper parts fit this single story; the hero is—with each successive appearance—the sum of what has happened to him. And psychically it all happened to Hemingway, who was never a bullfighter (although he tried it), or a prizefighter (although he has tried that too), or a one-armed, two-daughtered smuggler of rum and Chinamen (which he has apparently never tried at all). The hero is a twentieth-century American, born, raised and hurt in the Middle West, who like all of us has been going through life with the marks his experiences have made on him. The outlaws and professional sportsmen who have appeared along the way have taught the man to try to live by a code, but they are not the man himself. What is more, the lessons have not always been of the sort the hero can immediately master.

This becomes clear in a story called "The Gambler, the Nun and the Radio" (1933), which presents in one place both the hero and the man who exemplifies the code, and presents them as two quite different people. The generic Nick is here called Mr. Frazer; he is having a "bad time" again, and he is also, once more, to be associated with the man who wrote the story. The man whom the hero admires and studies is this time an unlucky gambler.

In 1930 Hemingway was in an automobile accident with John Dos Passos in Montana and had his arm very badly broken. In *Green Hills of Africa* (1935) Hemingway is thinking of this pain when he writes that the most "horror" he can remember going through he experienced

> one time in a hospital with my right arm broken off short between the elbow and the shoulder . . . the points of the bone having cut up the flesh of the biceps until it finally rotted, swelled, burst, and sloughed off in pus. Alone with the pain in the night of the fifth week of not sleeping . . .

This story, "The Gambler, the Nun and the Radio," transfers the injury to the leg, and tells again of that horror, and of life in the hospital. It introduces a gambler—honorable, according to the standards of his trade, and courageous—and a nun. Frazer, who is a writer, is having the bad time described just above, but, the author reminds us, this is not the first time for him: "His nerves went bad at the end of five weeks. . . . Mr. Frazer had been through this all before. The only thing which was new to him was the radio. . . . He was learning to listen to it without thinking." Clearly, this is our old friend Nick, and Montana (the location of the radio stations he hears signing off at night suggests this, as the songs he hears suggest 1930; Hemingway's own recuperation took place in a Billings hospital).

Part of the story (the radio part) has to do with the hero's insomnia, his bad nerves ("when the nurse goes out I cry an hour, two hours. It rests me . . .") and with his attempts to avoid thinking, which, as always, makes things worse. Alcohol ("the giant killer") and the radio are what keep him going; he plays the radio all night so quietly no one else can hear it. Lying there and concentrating on the sounds becomes another rite with which to keep off the "evil spirits"—the equivalent of fishing on the Big Two-Hearted, in actuality or retrospect. The sickness leads him as before to an extreme bitterness, and it is in this story that the nadir of Hemingway's pessimism is reached in the famous passage: "Religion is the opium of the people . . . and music . . . and sexual intercourse . . . and bread is the opium of the people."

This is one way to live in the world, but it is not a very good way. The nun, Sister Cecilia, represents an alternative: she believes she knows what the world is all about and she lives in it by her faith. Though quite charming, this faith seems also naïve to Frazer; it is Cayetano, the petty gambler, who has the code to live by. The Hemingway hero, although he greatly admires this code, is not able to live by it. He is too tortured, too thoughtful, too perplexed, for that; he cries at night—a grown man. This is incredibly "messy" of him, and messiness is above all things forbidden. The hero tries, but he cannot make it, and that is why the stories which most clearly present the code have a separate character to enact it. It is Cayetano (who is in much more pain—as the hero points out—than Mr. Frazer) who does not show a single sign of his suffering.

This Cayetano, a Mexican cardplayer, is brought into the hospital nearly dead, with two bullets in his stomach. A detective accompanies him and tries to get the dying man to name the one who shot him. The detective tries to convince the cardsharp: "It's all right to tell who shot you. . . . You don't have to act like a moving picture." This is just the point; he does. Frazer, acting as interpreter, obliges the detective by trying too: "One can, with honor, denounce one's assailant," he says. But he doesn't really believe it and is proud when Cayetano "won't talk." The Mexican suffers on alone at the hospital; his only visitors come to see him involuntarily, and are really partisan to the man who shot him. He suffers without a word of complaint and finally Frazer talks to him again, and learns he has been shot by a man who lost money to him in a crooked card game: the gambler will cheat at cards as Jack will throw a fight, but he will not take revenge on the man who nearly killed him for cheating, or even complain of it—as Jack would not back out of his agreement—and he insists, when he is praised for his courage, "it was nothing."

These distinctions between the hero and his tutor—the man whom the hero emulates, who has the code he would like to operate by, too—clarify and enrich a couple of Hemingway's later, best, and best-known stories, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." These long pieces are both clearly rituals—one a ceremonial triumph over fear, the other a rite in which a part of the self is destroyed. They present certain difficulties, however, because of new approaches the author takes to his material and his protagonists.

Hemingway distinguishes between "true" and "made up" stories. Both of these, though they make a great deal of use of autobiography, are of the latter type. These are personal stories, but they are not literal ones: in Africa in the thirties Hemingway did not die of an infection, nor was he chased by a lion and murdered by his wife. The protagonists are also "made up" in that in each of the stories the writer adopts a mask that is for once grotesque, incongruous and truly a distortion. Both Macomber and Harry (in "Kilimanjaro") exaggerate some of the hero's weaknesses, failings, shortcomings. Harry is a failure as a man and as a writer; Macomber is a coward. It is very much as if Hemingway were getting rid of things again, but here he has a new and hypercritical attitude toward his protagonists. These men are not wholly unfamiliar as leading players in Hemingway, but they are outside the pattern he has built up in that they are seen through a glass very darkly or, to put it more cogently, they are seen *in* a glass—as in a Coney Island funhouse—which mirrors into magnified prominence the growing paunch, the receding hairline, the sagging muscles.

"The Short Happy Life" is, among other things, a detailed description of the process of learning the code, and its value. Macomber, a coward, is seen in the story learning the code from Wilson, his professional hunting guide. He is presented as being very ignorant of this code at first, but he painfully learns it and he becomes a man in the process. Before that happens, however, it is apparent that Hemingway is using this plot of instruction in courage and honor to comment, as he has not done to this extent before, on many other things. The story is, for example, an analysis of the relationship between the sexes in America, and the relationship is in the nature of declared warfare.

D. H. Lawrence, in an essay on *The Scarlet Letter*, launches an assault on the American male who, he says, has lost his "ithyphallic authority" over the American woman who therefore dominates, and then destroys, what is left. "The Short Happy Life" develops and intensifies Lawrence's notion with enormous skill. Francis Macomber, when under the tutelage of the hunter Wilson, learns courage and honor and to embrace the code; he attains his manhood, which is not the same thing as losing his virginity or reaching his twenty-first birthday, as the characters point out. When he attains this manhood he regains the ithyphallic authority he had lost and his wife, now panicky herself in her new role, must destroy him literally. Before he became a man she had committed adultery almost in his presence, knowing him helpless to stop her. When he becomes a man, and she can no longer rule him in the Laurencian sense, she sends a bullet to the base of his skull.

Obviously Macomber is something different from a grown Nick Adams. What he represents instead is an extreme projection of the hero's problem of fear, and the story about him delineates an imagined solution to that problem. Unlike Macomber, Hemingway has never "just shown himself, very publicly, to be a coward." When he wrote the story he had just very publicly and maliciously been *called* one by Gertrude Stein,[1] and he retaliated in *Green Hills of Africa* by calling her a "bitch."

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[1] This was in her *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933), p. 265. Investigation shows that Miss Stein rather misrepresented her relationship with Hemingway here, and it may be that Miss Toklas, who disliked him, was behind this famous quarrel which, incidentally, was patched up in Paris in 1945.

But the facts of the matter seem to indicate that she had no more reason for calling him "yellow" than that she knew it was an insult which would hurt, for reasons to be examined later.

However, Macomber is not so extreme a projection that all contact with the hero and with Hemingway is lost. He is given Hemingway's age, his physical fitness and athleticism, and his expertness with big game and fish. Hemingway's own guide, "Pop," in *Green Hills of Africa,* looks very like Wilson, hunting guide of the story. In addition, the extraordinary "immediateness" with which the sensations of fear are felt by Macomber suggests the extent to which the author can feel for him. And fear, after all, was one of the hero's central problems.

In the course of this story Macomber completely disgraces himself in the presence of his wife and his hunting guide before he learns the code and gets their respect. He has already committed the unpardonable sin when the story opens: he ran away from a charging lion, and, as Wilson says, this is just not done—"no white ever bolts." Not only that, but he goes right on committing errors: he asks Wilson not to talk about his cowardice to other people, which for the professional hunter and possessor of the code's book of etiquette is "supposed to be bad form," and after Wilson insults him he spinelessly apologizes. In addition he cannot control his wife, who hounds him without mercy. He gets a chance to redeem himself when it comes time to track down another lion, which he has wounded badly, into the long grass where it is lying in wait for those who shot it. Again he completely fails. First he wants to send the inadequately armed African "boys" in after the animal; when Wilson refuses to be party to this type of slaughter he suggests they leave the beast hidden in the grass. He could not have stumbled on a more wretched violation: someone else might meet him unawares and be killed; even if this doesn't happen it is certain that the lion is in considerable pain and it is their responsibility to do for him what cannot be done for human beings. And then finally when they search out the lion Macomber bolts again, running wildly in panic. When the three hunters are reassembled in their car after Wilson has killed the charging, wounded animal, Margot Macomber celebrates the complete loss of her husband's authority by leaning in front of him and kissing Wilson on the mouth. That night Macomber wakes to discover that she is not in her cot in the tent with him. "He lay awake with that knowledge for two hours." This adultery does not go against Wilson's code, it is explained; as a matter of fact he "carried a double size cot on safari to accommodate any windfalls he might receive." The standards of the people who hired him were his standards: "They were his standards in all except the shooting."

It is these shooting standards which Macomber finally learns and which, although they eventually bring his death, make him, for a short happy lifetime, a man. Quite suddenly, when shooting a buffalo, he loses his fear. The lessons Wilson has been teaching him are now his own. A wounded buffalo gets away, as the lion did, and he can hardly wait to go in after the beast. In 1942 Hemingway, writing from his own experience an introduction to a collection of war stories, had this to say: "Cowardice . . . is almost always simply a lack of ability to suspend the functioning of the imagination."[2] In "the Macomber affair" he explains it the same way:

> It had taken a strange chance of hunting, a sudden precipitation into action without opportunity for worrying beforehand, to bring this about with Macomber. . . .

Fear was "gone like an operation. Something else grew in its place. . . . Made him into a man."

Putting the bad things into words may rid one of them, but it is necessary for the earlier-initiated Wilson to make clear to the hero that the same principle applies to so good a thing as the transformation into manhood, which he has just undergone: "You're not supposed to mention it. . . . Doesn't do to talk too much about all this. Talk the whole thing away." Wilson, warming now to Macomber, also confides to him the "thing he had lived by"—a quotation from Shakespeare. The extent to which Hemingway is able to project himself even into this maladroit and cowardly Macomber is further brought out by these lines from Shakespeare. Hemingway revealed this, perhaps without realizing it, in 1942 in the introduction just cited, when he told how in the war, in 1917, *he* learned courage from a British officer (Wilson is very British) who gave him, Hemingway, the identical message Wilson here gives Macomber:

> "By my troth, I care not; a man can die but once; we owe God a death and let it go which way it will he that dies this year is quit for the next."

The climax of the story has come, and Macomber's wife, recognizing the hero's new life as a man, cannot tolerate a long denouement. When her husband goes in after the wounded buffalo she—ostensibly aiming for the beast in order to save Francis—kills him. Wilson prepares to exonerate her with explanatory photographs, and the story ends. Wilson is like the prizefighter Jack and the gambler Cayetano: he kills—as a profession—animals who have scarcely a chance of protecting themselves; he consorts with rich decadents and adopts their moral standards; he lives a lonely, compromised life. But out of this he builds the code he lives by; he has his courage and his honor: he would not "squeal" on his employer; he will not leave the animals he has pitilessly shot to suffer. He bristles with "won't do," "isn't done," "bad form," and "not supposed to." Macomber—not the hero, but like the heroes in this—admires the code and tries to attain to it. He makes the grade, but it costs him his life.

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[2] *Men at War: The Best War Stories of All Time* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1942), p. xxvii.

As the Macomber story dramatizes the casting off of fear, so "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" is a fictionalized purge, in this case of a whole set of guilty feelings. In this story Hemingway sourly depicts himself (there is no question of his identity here) as an abject failure, dying from an infected scratch five thousand miles from home. The story, interesting in many ways, is probably less tight and dramatic than the Macomber one, but it attempts different things. There is a conscious and explicit use of symbolism—which is unusual with Hemingway—and there is plenty of ammunition for the critics who have attacked the author for his preoccupation with death, for that preoccupation is at least ostensibly what the story is about.

There is no question that the protagonist Harry is the Hemingway hero. Harry is a writer, as was Nick, in "Fathers and Sons"; he has thought a great deal about death, as Hemingway has done; he thinks of his part in the war against the Austrians, whom Nick fought; he later went skiing with them, as Nick did; he tries to keep himself from thinking, as Nick tried; he had "sold vitality, in one form or another, all his life," which is a way of putting what Hemingway has done; Africa was "where he had been happiest," which the author says of himself in the *Green Hills;* and no one who had read that book, in which the second Mrs. Hemingway figures, could fail to suspect in Harry's wife a less flattering portrait of the same woman. Here, too, is again the man who had "seen the things that he could never think of and later still he had seen much worse." Harry is very autobiographically drawn: he thinks of that room in Paris (in which Verlaine once lived) where "he had written the start of all he was to do." He also identifies himself, to knowing readers of F. Scott Fitzgerald at least, by remembering "poor Julian" and his romantic awe of the rich. Julian had "started a story once that began, 'The rich are very different from you and me.' And someone had said to Julian, 'Yes, they have more money.' " The story was Fitzgerald's "Rich Boy," and it was Hemingway who made the joke.

There cannot be many writers who stick so rigorously to writing of themselves, and—in a way—*for* themselves, asking at the same time that an audience take an interest in what they are doing, and at the same time succeeding with a very large part of the reading public, as Hemingway has done. "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" is widely read, widely anthologized, widely interpreted, and Hollywood paid an all-time high for it. But despite the fact that several versions of what the story is about are meaningful, this is also a special and private thing: a statement by Hemingway of his aesthetic aims and beliefs, and an analysis of his past failures as a writer of prose fiction, as of 1936, a year that was crucial for him. It can be read quite legitimately as a more objective and generalized piece of prose—as, for instance, a story of a writer dying on a safari in Africa, reviewing his past and previewing his future. But for its author it was an exercise in personal and aesthetic hygiene.

Hemingway, in his curious, stubborn way, is a writer absolutely and wholeheartedly dedicated to his craft, and—as is the way of serious artists—he dreams of immortality for some of what he has done; he thinks, that is, of writing prose that will be so pure that it can never spoil, that will be permanent. In 1935, in *Green Hills of Africa*, a nonfiction work which supplies considerable background for "Kilimanjaro," he spoke of "how far prose can be carried if anyone is serious enough and has luck." As for luck, no man knows, but about his prose Hemingway has been serious enough—grimly, humorlessly serious—and in a book on writing and bullfighting he had announced that he himself was trying very hard to write prose "which would be as valid in a year or in ten years or, with luck and if you stated it purely enough, always."

But as ample evidence testifies, 1936 found Hemingway disgusted with himself. This story itself is eloquent. He had been chasing about Europe and Africa with the very rich (though they "were dull and they drank too much, or they played too much backgammon"), and drinking all the time himself ("so much that he blunted the edge of his perceptions"). Seven fallow years had elapsed since he had written a first-rate book, *A Farewell to Arms* ("and you made an attitude that you cared nothing for the work you used to do, now that you could no longer do it"). Two marriages, both discussed in the story, had ended badly; he felt he had been disgracing himself in *Esquire:* "He had destroyed his talent by not using it, by betrayals of himself and what he believed in, by drinking so much . . . by laziness, by sloth, and by snobbery, by pride and by prejudice. . . . It was a talent all right but instead of using it, he had traded on it." To make matters worse, "for years" death had "obsessed him": now in horror he sees the possibility that it could all end like this—on an idle safari, haggling with a woman. And very little stated purely enough to last always.

It is apparent that in 1936 Hemingway made a mighty resolve that he would not, like poor Julian, really be "wrecked," that he would achieve permanence despite everything he had done wrong. First it was necessary to inventory everything in the place, and to heave out everything that could not be used—to destroy it, indeed, to spit it away—before such a radical development as occurs in a book of the next year, *To Have and Have Not*, could be possible. "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" does precisely these things, in addition to describing the goal which is the reason for the stocktaking, and presenting the purge itself, and even to prophesying what the final outcome will be.

"The Snows" opens with an introductory paragraph whose symbols state the better part of the story's meaning:

> Kilimanjaro is a snow covered mountain 19,710 feet high, and is said to be the highest mountain in Africa. Its western summit is called the Masai "Ngàje Ngài," the House of God. Close to the western summit there is the dried and frozen carcass of a leopard. No one has explained what the leopard was seeking at that altitude.

This passage can seem enigmatic enough, and has been widely struggled with, but in this context its meaning emerges. It is Hemingway himself who "explains" what the leopard sought at that altitude: the House of God, immortality. The leopard did not quite make the summit, and in his mysterious attempt to reach it perished, but his carcass is dried and frozen: he died in the attempt to save his soul, as all who try it must, but frozen at that temperature and height the leopard is permanent. He can never spoil, and he presents a perfect contrast to Harry with a gangrened leg, who is very mortal, rotting fast away in the heat of the lowlands.

But Harry is a writer, and if a thing is said perfectly, if it is perfectly immaculate, if it is said "purely enough," it cannot spoil, it is frozen, and its author is immortal. At the end of the story Harry "dreams" of a plane which comes to rescue the writer, and after taking off with the pilot he sees, there, "unbelievably white in the sun . . . the square top of Kilimanjaro. And then he knew that there was where he was going." It is at this precise moment that Hemingway reorganizes his forces, and leaves the hero as failure for what he hopes will be greater things. Leaving it back under the mosquito bar with the woman who has come in some way to stand for all the things which corrupted it, he here sloughs off his contaminated skin—"somehow he had gotten his leg out and it hung down alongside the cot. The dressings had all come down and she could not look at it."

The Death of Love in The Sun Also Rises

MARK SPILKA

ONE OF THE MOST PERSISTENT THEMES of the twenties was the death of love in World War I. All the major writers recorded it, often in piecemeal fashion, as part of the larger postwar scene; but only Hemingway seems to have caught it whole and delivered it in lasting fictional form. His intellectual grasp of the theme might account for this. Where D. H. Lawrence settles for the shock of war on the Phallic Consciousness, or where Eliot presents assorted glimpes of sterility, Hemingway seems to design an extensive parable. Thus, in *The Sun Also Rises*, his protagonists are deliberately shaped as allegorical figures: Jake Barnes and Brett Ashley are two lovers desexed by the war; Robert Cohn is the false knight who challenges their despair; while Romero, the stalwart bullfighter, personifies the good life which will survive their failure. Of course, these characters are not abstractions in the text; they are realized through the most concrete style in American fiction, and their larger meaning is implied only by their response to immediate situations. But the implications are there, the parable is at work in every scene, and its presence lends unity and depth to the whole novel.

Barnes himself is a fine example of this technique. Cut off from love by a shell wound, he seems to suffer from an undeserved misfortune. But as most readers agree, his condition represents a peculiar form of emo-

SOURCE: *Reprinted from Charles Shapiro, ed.,* Twelve Original Essays on Great American Novels, *pp. 238–256, by permission of the author and of the Wayne State University Press.* *Copyright 1958 by the Wayne State University Press.* *Permission to quote from Ernest Hemingway,* The Sun Also Rises *(1926) granted by the publisher, Charles Scribner's Sons.*

tional impotence. It does not involve distaste for the flesh, as with Lawrence's crippled veteran, Clifford Chatterley; instead Barnes lacks the power to control love's strength and durability. His sexual wound, the result of an unpreventable "accident" in the war, points to another realm where accidents can always happen and where Barnes is equally powerless to prevent them. In Book II of the novel he makes this same comparison while describing one of the dinners at Pamplona: "It was like certain dinners I remember from the war. There was much wine, an ignored tension, and a feeling of things coming that you could not prevent happening." This fear of emotional consequences is the key to Barnes' condition. Like so many Hemingway heroes, he has no way to handle subjective complications, and his wound is a token for this kind of impotence.

It serves the same purpose for the expatriate crowd in Paris. In some figurative manner these artists, writers, and derelicts have all been rendered impotent by the war. Thus, as Barnes presents them, they pass before us like a parade of sexual cripples, and we are able to measure them against his own forbearance in the face of a common problem. Whoever bears his sickness well is akin to Barnes; whoever adopts false postures, or willfully hurts others, falls short of his example. This is the organizing principle in Book I, this alignment of characters by their stoic qualities. But stoic or not, they are all incapable of love, and in their sober moments they seem to know it.

For this reason they feel especially upset whenever Robert Cohn appears. Cohn still upholds a romantic view of life, and since he affirms it with stubborn persistence, he acts like a goad upon his wiser contemporaries. As the narrator, Barnes must account for the challenge he presents them and the decisive turn it takes in later chapters. Accordingly, he begins the book with a review of Cohn's boxing career at Princeton. Though he has no taste for it, college boxing means a lot to Cohn. For one thing, it helps to compensate for anti-Semitic treatment from his classmates. More subtly, it turns him into an armed romantic, a man who can damage others in defense of his own beliefs. He also loves the pose of manhood which it affords him and seems strangely pleased when his nose is flattened in the ring. Soon other tokens of virility delight him, and he often confuses them with actual manliness. He likes the idea of a mistress more than he likes his actual mistress; or he likes the authority of editing and the prestige of writing, though he is a bad editor and a poor novelist. In other words, he always looks for internal strength in outward signs and sources. On leaving Princeton, he marries "on the rebound from the rotten time . . . in college." But in five years the marriage falls through, and he rebounds again to his present mistress, the forceful Frances Clyne. Then, to escape her dominance and his own disquiet, he begins to look for romance in far-off countries. As with most of his views, the source of this idea is an exotic book:

> He had been reading W. H. Hudson. That sounds like an innocent occupation, but Cohn had read and reread "The Purple Land." "The Purple Land" is a very sinister book if read too late in life. It recounts splendid imaginary amorous adventures of a perfect English gentleman in an intensely romantic land, the scenery of which is very well described. For a man to take it at thirty-four as a guidebook to what life holds is about as safe as it would be for a man of the same age to enter Wall Street direct from a French convent, equipped with a complete set of the more practical Alger books. Cohn, I believe, took every word of "The Purple Land" as literally as though it had been an R. G. Dun report.

Cohn's romanticism explains his key position in the parable. He is the last chivalric hero, the last defender of an outworn faith, and his function is to illustrate its present folly—to show us, through the absurdity of his behavior, that romantic love is dead, that one of the great guiding codes of the past no longer operates. "You're getting damned romantic," says Brett to Jake at one point in the novel. "No, bored," he replies, because for this generation boredom has become more plausible than love. As a foil to his contemporaries, Cohn helps to reveal why this is so.

Of course, there is much that is traditional in the satire on Cohn. Like the many victims of romantic literature, from Don Quixote to Tom Sawyer, he lives by what he reads and neglects reality at his own and others' peril. But Barnes and his friends have no alternative to Cohn's beliefs. There is nothing here, for example, like the neat balance between sense and sensibility in Jane Austen's world. Granted that Barnes is sensible enough, that he sees life clearly and that we are meant to contrast his private grief with Cohn's public suffering, his self-restraint with Cohn's deliberate self-exposure. Yet, emasculation aside, Barnes has no way to measure or control the state of love; and though he recognizes this with his mind and tries to act accordingly, he seems no different from Cohn in his deepest feelings. When he is alone with Brett, he wants to live with her in the country, to go with her to San Sebastian, to go up to her room, to keep her in his own room, or to keep on kissing her—though he can never really act upon such sentiments. Nor are they merely the yearnings of a tragically impotent man, for eventually they will lead Barnes to betray his own principles and to abandon self-respect, all for the sake of Lady Ashley. No, at best he is a restrained romantic, a man who carries himself well in the face of love's impossibilities, but who seems to share with Cohn a common (if hidden) weakness.

The sexual parade continues through the early chapters. Besides Cohn and his possessive mistress, there is the prostitute Georgette, whom Barnes picks up one day "because of a vague sentimental idea that it would be nice to eat with some one." Barnes introduces her to his friends as his fiancée, and as his private joke affirms, the two have much in common. Georgette is sick and sterile, having reduced love to a simple monetary exchange; but like Barnes, she manages to be frank and forthright and to keep an even keel among the drifters of Paris. Together they form a pair of honest cripples, in contrast with the various pretenders whom they meet along the Left Bank. Among the latter are Cohn and Frances Clyne, the writer Braddocks and his wife, and Robert Prentiss, a rising young novelist who seems to verbalize their phoniness: "Oh, how charmingly you get angry," he tells Barnes. "I wish I had that faculty." Barnes' honest anger has been aroused by the appearance of a band of homosexuals, accompanied by Brett Ashley. When one of the band spies Georgette, he decides to dance with her; then one by one the rest follow suit, in deliberate parody of normal love. Brett herself provides a key to the dizzy sexual medley. With a man's felt hat on her boyish bob, and with her familiar reference to men as fellow "chaps," she completes the distortion of sexual roles which seems to characterize the period. For the war, which has unmanned Barnes and his contemporaries, has turned Brett into the freewheeling equal of any man. It has taken her first sweetheart's life through dysentery and has sent her present husband home in a dangerous state of shock. For Brett these blows are the equivalent of Jake's emasculation; they seem to release her from her womanly nature and expose her to the male prerogatives of drink and promiscuity. Once she claims these rights as her own, she becomes an early but more honest version of Catherine Barkley, the English nurse in Hemingway's next important novel, *A Farewell to Arms*. Like Catherine, Brett has been a nurse on the Italian front and has lost a sweetheart in the war; but for her there is no saving interlude of love with a wounded patient, no rigged and timely escape through death in childbirth. Instead she survives the colossal violence, the disruption of her personal life, and the exposure to mass promiscuity, to confront a moral and emotional vacuum among her postwar lovers. With this evidence of male default all around her, she steps off the romantic pedestal, moves freely through the bars of Paris, and stands confidently there beside her newfound equals. Ironically, her most recent conquest, Robert Cohn, fails to see the bearing of such changes on romantic love. He still believes that Brett is womanly and therefore deeply serious about intimate matters. After their first meeting, he describes her as "absolutely fine and straight" and nearly strikes Barnes for thinking otherwise; and a bit later, after their brief affair in the country, he remains unconvinced "that it didn't mean anything." But when men no longer command respect, and women replace their natural warmth with masculine freedom and mobility, there can be no serious love.

Brett does have some respect for Barnes, even a little tenderness, though her actions scarcely show abiding love. At best she can affirm his worth and share his standards and perceptions. When in public, she knows how to keep her essential misery to herself; when alone with Barnes, she will express her feelings, admit her faults, and even display good judgment. Thus her friend, Count Mippipopolous, is introduced to Barnes as "one of us." The count qualifies by virtue of his war wounds, his invariable calmness, and his curious system of values. He appreciates good food, good wine, and a quiet place in which to enjoy them. Love also has a place in his system, but since he is "always in love," the place seems rather shaky. Like Jake and Brett and perhaps Georgette, he simply bears himself well among the postwar ruins.

The count completes the list of cripples who appear in Book I. In a broader sense, they are all disaffiliates, all men and women who have cut themselves off from conventional society and who have made Paris their permanent playground. Jake Barnes has introduced them, and we have been able to test them against his stoic attitudes toward life in a moral wasteland. Yet such life is finally unbearable, as we have also seen whenever Jake and Brett are alone together, or whenever Jake is alone with his thoughts. He needs a healthier code to live by, and for this reason the movement in Book II is away from Paris to the trout stream at Burguete and the bull ring at Pamplona. Here a more vital testing process occurs, and with the appearance of Bill Gorton, we get our first inkling of its nature.

Gorton is a successful writer who shares with Barnes a love for boxing and other sports. In Vienna he has helped to rescue a splendid Negro boxer from an angry and intolerant crowd. The incident has spoiled Vienna for him, and as his reaction suggests, the sports world will provide the terms of moral judgment from this point onward in the novel. Or more accurately, Jake Barnes' feelings about sports will shape the rest of the novel. For with Hemingway, the great outdoors is chiefly a state of mind, a projection of moral and emotional attitudes onto physical arenas, so that a clear account of surface action will reproduce these attitudes in the reader. In "Big Two-Hearted River," for example, he describes Nick Adams' fishing and camping activities along a trout stream in Michigan. His descriptions run to considerable length, and they are all carefully detailed, almost as if they were meant for a fishing manual. Yet the details themselves have strong emotional connotations for Nick Adams. He thinks of his camp as "the good place," the place where none of his previous troubles can touch him. He has left society behind him, and as the story begins, there is even a burnt town at his back, to signify his disaffiliation. He has also walked miles to reach an arbitrary camp site, and this is one of the ways in which he sets his own conditions for happiness and then lives up to them. He finds extraordinary pleasure, moreover, in the techniques of making coffee and pitching camp, or in his responses to fishing and eating. In fact, his sensations have become so valuable that he doesn't want to rush them: they bring health, pleasure, beauty, and a sense of order which is sorely missing in his civilized experience; they are part of a healing process, a private and imaginative means of wiping out the damages of civilized life. When this process is described with elaborate attention to surface detail, the effect on the reader is decidedly subjective.

The same holds true, of course, for the fishing trip in *The Sun Also Rises*. As Barnes and Gorton approach "the good place," each item in the landscape is singled out and given its own importance. Later the techniques of fishing are treated with the same reverence for detail. For like Nick Adams, these men have left the wasteland for the green plains of health; they have traveled miles, by train and on foot, to reach a particular trout stream. The fishing there is good, the talk free and easy, and even Barnes is able to sleep well after lunch, though he is usually an insomniac. The meal itself is handled like a mock religious ceremony: "Let us rejoice in our blessings," says Gorton. "Let us utilize the fowls of the air. Let us utilize the produce of the vine. Will you utilize a little, brother?" A few days later, when they visit the old monastery at Roncevalles, this combination of fishing, drinking, and male camaraderie is given an edge over religion itself. With their English friend, Harris, they honor the monastery as a remarkable place, but decide that "it isn't the same as fishing"; then all agree to "utilize" a little pub across the way. At the trout stream, moreover, romantic love is given the same comparative treatment and seems sadly foolish before the immediate joys of fishing:

> It was a little past noon and there was not much shade, but I sat against the trunk of two of the trees that grew together, and read. The book was something by A. E. W. Mason, and I was reading a wonderful story about a man who had been frozen in the Alps and then fallen into a glacier and disappeared, and his bride was going to wait twenty-four years exactly for his body to come out on the moraine, while her true love waited too, and they were still waiting when Bill came up [with four trout in his bag]. . . . His face was sweaty and happy.

As these comparisons show, the fishing trip has been invested with unique importance. By sticking closely to the surface action, Barnes has evoked the deeper attitudes which underly it and which make it a therapeutic process for him. He describes himself now as a "rotten Catholic" and speaks briefly of his thwarted love for Brett; but with religion defunct and love no longer possible, he can at least find happiness through private and imaginative means. Thus he now constructs a more positive code to follow: as with Nick Adams, it brings him health, pleasure, beauty and order, and helps to wipe out the damage of his troubled life in Paris.

Yet somehow the code lacks depth and substance. To gain these advantages, Barnes must move to Pamplona, which stands roughly to Burguete as the swamp in "Big Two-Hearted River" stands to the trout stream. In the latter story, Nick Adams prefers the clear portion of the river to its second and more congested heart:

> In the swamp the banks were bare, the big cedars came together overhead, the sun did not come through, except in patches; in the fast deep water, in the half light, the fishing would be tragic. In the swamp fishing was a tragic adventure. Nick did not want it. . . . There were plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp.

The fishing is tragic here because it involves the risk of death. Nick is not yet ready for that challenge, but plainly it will test his manhood when he comes to face it. In *The Sun Also Rises* Barnes makes no such demands upon himself; but he is strongly attracted to the young bullfighter, Pedro Romero, whose courage before death lends moral weight to the sportsman's code.[1]

[1] Hemingway's preoccupation with death has been explained in various ways: by his desire to write about simple, fundamental things; by his "sado-masochism"; or more fairly and accurately, by his need to efface an actual war wound, or to supplant the ugly, senseless violence of war with ordered, graceful violence. Yet chiefly the risk of death lends moral seriousness to a

So Pamplona is an extension of Burguete for Barnes: gayer and more festive on the surface, but essentially more serious. The spoilers from Paris have arrived, but (Cohn excepted) they are soon swept up by the fiesta: their mood is jubilant, they are surrounded by dancers, and they sing, drink and shout with the peasant crowd. Barnes himself is among fellow *aficionados;* he gains "real emotion" from the bullfights and feels truly elated afterwards. Even his friends seem like "such nice people," though he begins to feel uneasy when an argument breaks out between them. The tension is created by Brett's fiancé, Mike Campbell, who is aware of her numerous infidelities and who seems to accept them with amoral tolerance. Actually he resents them, so that Cohn (the perennial Jewish scapegoat) provides him with a convenient outlet for his feelings. He begins to bait him for following Brett around like a sick steer.

Mike's description is accurate enough. Cohn is always willing to suffer in public and to absorb insults for the sake of true love. On the other hand, he is also "ready to do battle for his lady," and when the chance finally comes, he knocks his rivals down like a genuine knight-errant. With Jake and Mike he has no trouble, but when he charges into Pedro's room to rescue Brett, the results are disastrous: Brett tells him off, the bullfighter refuses to stay knocked down, and no one will shake hands with him at the end, in accord with prep-school custom. When Brett remains with Pedro, Cohn retires to his room, alone and friendless.

This last encounter is the highpoint of the parable, for in the Code Hero, the Romantic Hero has finally met his match. As the clash between them shows, there is a difference between physical and moral victory, between chivalric stubbornness and real self-respect. Thus Pedro fights to repair an affront to his dignity; though he is badly beaten, his spirit is untouched by his opponent, whereas Cohn's spirit is completely smashed. From the beginning Cohn has based his manhood on skill at boxing, or upon a woman's love, never upon internal strength; but now, when neither skill nor love supports him, he has bludgeoned his way to his own emptiness. Compare his conduct with Romero's, on the following day, as the younger man performs for Brett in the bull ring:

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private code which lacks it. The risk is arbitrary; when a man elects to meet it, his beliefs take on subjective weight and he is able to give meaning to his private life. In this sense, he moves forever on a kind of imaginative frontier, where the opposition is always Nature, in some token form, where the stakes are always manliness and self-respect, and where death invests the scene with tragic implications. In *The Sun Also Rises*, Romero lives on such a frontier, and for Barnes and his friends he provides an example of just these values.

> Everything of which he could control the locality he did in front of her all that afternoon. Never once did he look up. . . . Because he did not look up to ask if it pleased he did it all for himself inside, and it strengthened him, and yet he did it for her, too. But he did not do it for her at any loss to himself. He gained by it all through the afternoon.

Thus, where Cohn expends and degrades himself for his beloved, Romero pays tribute without self-loss. His manhood is a thing independent of women, and for this reason he holds special attractions for Jake Barnes.

By now it seems apparent that Cohn and Pedro are extremes for which Barnes is the unhappy medium. His resemblance to Pedro is clear enough: they share the same code, they both believe that a man's dignity depends on his own resources. His resemblance to Cohn is more subtle, but at this stage of the book it becomes grossly evident. Appropriately enough, the exposure comes through the knockout blow from Cohn, which dredges up a strange pre-war experience:

> Walking across the square to the hotel everything looked new and changed. . . . I felt as I felt once coming home from an out-of-town football game. I was carrying a suitcase with my football things in it, and I walked up the street from the station in the town I had lived in all my life and it was all new. They were raking the lawns and burning leaves in the road, and I stopped for a long time and watched. It was all strange. Then I went on, and my feet seemed to be a long way off, and everything seemed to come from a long way off, and I could hear my feet walking a great distance away. I had been kicked in the head early in the game. It was like that crossing the square. It was like that going up the stairs in the hotel. Going up the stairs took a long time, and I had the feeling that I was carrying my suitcase.

Barnes seems to have regressed here to his youthful football days. As he moves on up the stairs to see Cohn, who has been asking for him, he still carries his "phantom suitcase" with him; and when he enters Cohn's room, he even sets it down. Cohn himself has just returned from the fight with Romero: "There he was, face down on the bed, crying. He had on a white polo shirt, the kind he'd worn at Princeton." In other words, Cohn has also regressed to his abject college days: they are both emotional adolescents, about the same age as the nineteen-year-old Romero, who is the only real man among them. Of course, these facts are not spelled out for us, except through the polo shirt and the phantom suitcase, which remind us (inadvertently) of one of those dreamlike fantasies by the Czech genius, Franz Kafka, in which trunks and youthful clothes are symbols of arrested development. Yet there has already been some helpful spelling out in Book I, during a curious (and otherwise pointless) exchange between Cohn and another expatriate, the drunkard Harvey Stone. After first calling Cohn a moron, Harvey asks him to say, without thinking about it, what he would rather do if he could do anything he wanted. Cohn is again urged to say what comes into his head first, and soon replies, "I think I'd rather play football again with what I know about handling myself, now." To which Harvey responds: "I misjudged you. . . . You're not a moron. You're only a case of arrested development."

The first thought to enter Cohn's mind here has been suppressed by Barnes for a long time, but in Book II the knockout blow releases it: more than anything else, he too would like to "play football again," to prevent that kick to his head from happening, or that smash to the jaw from Cohn, or that sexual wound which explains either blow. For the truth about Barnes seems obvious now: he has always been an emotional adolescent. Like Nick Adams, he has grown up in a society which has little use for manliness; as an expression of that society, the war has robbed him of his dignity as a man and has thus exposed him to indignities with women. We must understand here that the war, the early football game, and the fight with Cohn have this in common: they all involve ugly, senseless, or impersonal forms of violence, in which a man has little chance to set the terms of his own integrity. Hence for Hemingway they represent the kinds of degradation which can occur at any point in modern society—and the violence at Pamplona is our current sample of such degradation. Indeed, the whole confluence of events now points to the social meaning of Jake's wound, for just as Cohn has reduced him to a dazed adolescent, so has Brett reduced him to a slavish pimp. When she asks for his help in her affair with Pedro, Barnes has no integrity to rely on; he can only serve her as Cohn has served her, like a sick romantic steer. Thus, for love's sake, he will allow her to use him as a go-between, to disgrace him with his friend, Montoya, to corrupt Romero, and so strip the whole fiesta of significance. In the next book he will even run to her rescue in Madrid, though by then he can at least recognize his folly and supply his own indictment: "That was it. Send a girl off with one man. Introduce her to another to go off with him. Now go and bring her back. And sign the wire with love. That was it all right." It seems plain, then, that Cohn and Brett have given us a peacetime demonstration, postwar style, of the meaning of Jake's shell wound.

At Pamplona the demonstration continues. Brett strolls through the fiesta with her head high, "as though [it] were being staged in her honor, and she found it pleasant and amusing." When Romero presents her with a bull's ear "cut by popular acclamation," she carries it off to her hotel, stuffs it far back in the drawer of the bed-table, and forgets about it. The ear was taken, however, from the same bull which had killed one of the crowd a few days before, during the dangerous bull-run through the streets; later the entire town attended the man's funeral, along with drinking and dancing societies from nearby communities. For the crowd, the death of this bull was a communal triumph and his ear a token of communal strength; for Brett the ear is a private trophy. In effect, she has robbed the community of its triumph, as she will now rob it of its hero. As an *aficionado*, Barnes understands this threat too well. These are decadent times in the bull ring, marred by false aesthetics; Romero alone has "the old thing," the old "purity of line through the maximum of exposure": his corruption by Brett will complete the decadence. But mainly the young fighter means something more personal to Barnes. In the bull ring he combines grace, control and sincerity with manliness; in the fight with Cohn he proves his integrity where skill is lacking. His values are exactly those of the hunter in "Francis Macomber," or of the fisherman in *The Old Man and the Sea.* As one of these few remaining images of independent manhood, he offers Barnes the comfort of vicarious redemption. Brett seems to smash this as she leaves with Pedro for Madrid. To ward off depression, Barnes can only get drunk and retire to bed; the fiesta goes on outside, but it means nothing now: the "good place" has been ruined.

As Book III begins, Barnes tries to reclaim his dignity and to cleanse himself of the damage at Pamplona. He goes to San Sebastian and sits quietly there in a café, listening to band concerts; or he goes swimming there alone, diving deep in the green waters. Then a telegram from Brett arrives, calling him to Madrid to help her out of trouble. At once he is like Cohn again, ready to serve his lady at the expense of self-respect. Yet in Madrid he learns to accept, emotionally, what he has always faintly understood. As he listens to Brett, he begins to drink heavily, as if her story has driven home a painful lesson. Brett herself feels "rather good" about sending Pedro away: she has at least been able to avoid being "one of these bitches that ruins children." This is a moral triumph for her, as Barnes agrees; but he can scarcely ignore its implications for himself. For when Brett refuses to let her hair grow long for Pedro, it means that her role in life is fixed: she can no longer reclaim her lost womanhood; she can no longer live with a fine man without destroying him. This seems to kill the illusion which is behind Jake's suffering throughout the novel: namely, that if he hadn't been wounded, if he had somehow survived the war with his manhood intact, then he and Brett would have become true lovers. The closing lines confirm his total disillusionment:

> "Oh, Jake," Brett said, "we could have had such a damned good time together."
>
> Ahead was a mounted policeman in khaki directing traffic. He raised his baton. The car slowed suddenly pressing Brett against me.
>
> "Yes," I said. "Isn't it pretty to think so?"

"Pretty" is a romantic word which means here "foolish to consider what could *never* have happened," and not "what can't happen now." The signal for this interpretation comes from the policeman who directs traffic between Brett's speech and Barnes' reply. With his khaki clothes and his preventive baton, he stands for the war and the society which made it, for the force which stops the lovers' car, and which robs them of their normal sexual roles. As Barnes now sees, love itself is dead for their generation. Even without his wound, he would still be unmanly, and Brett unable to let her hair grow long.

Yet according to the opening epigraphs, if one generation is lost and another comes, the earth abides forever; and according to Hemingway himself, the abiding earth is the novel's hero. Perhaps he is wrong on this point, or at least misleading. There are no joyous hymns to the seasons in this novel, no celebrations of fertility and change. The scenic descriptions are accurate enough, but rather flat; there is no deep feeling in them, only fondness, for the author takes less delight in nature than in outdoor sports. He is more concerned, that is, with baiting hooks and catching trout than with the Irati River and more pleased with the grace and skill of the bullfighter than with the bull's magnificence. In fact, it is the bullfighter who seems to abide in the novel, for surely the bulls are dead like the trout before them, having fulfilled their roles as beloved opponents. But Romero is very much alive as the novel ends. When he leaves the hotel in Madrid, he "pays the bill" for his affair with Brett, which means that he has earned all its benefits. He also dominates the final conversation between the lovers, and so dominates the closing section. We learn here that his sexual initiation has been completed and his independence assured. From now on, he can work out his life alone, moving again and again through his passes in the ring, gaining strength, order, and purpose as he meets his own conditions. He provides no literal prescription to follow here, no call to bullfighting as the answer to Barnes' problems; but he does provide an image of integrity, against which Barnes and his generation are weighed and found wanting. In this sense, Pedro is the real hero of the parable, the final moral touchstone, the man whose code gives meaning to a world where love and religion are defunct, where the proofs of manhood are difficult and scarce, and where every man must learn to define his own moral conditions and then live up to them.

William Faulkner

William Faulkner and the Figure in the Carpet

OLGA W. VICKERY

WITH *The Reivers*, Yoknapatawpha County, consisting of some 2,400 square miles and inhabited, according to William Faulkner's private census, by a population of 15,611, has received its last topographical, historical, and legendary delineation. Accordingly, Faulkner's works, so often placed in the tradition of the fictional saga, can now be set over against and distinguished from the achievements of Balzac, Zola, and Galsworthy as well as of his own contemporaries such as C. P. Snow or Anthony Powell.

The chief interest in linking him to this tradition is not to see what he has assimilated or copied but what he has achieved that is uniquely his own. And this involves identifying what Henry James has called "The Figure in the Carpet," "the thing that most makes [the writer] apply himself, the thing without the effort to achieve which he wouldn't write at all, the very passion of his passion, the part of the business in which, for him, the flame of art burns most intensely." Certainly Faulk-

SOURCE: *Reprinted from* The South Atlantic Quarterly, *LXIII (Summer 1964), 318–335, by permission of the author and the Duke University Press.*

ner's uniqueness is not to be found in a chronological rendering of events and characters such as Malcolm Cowley suggests in his introduction to *The Portable Faulkner*. Nor is it revealed in the essentially topographical arrangement of material in the *Collected Stories*. Such patterns, whatever their intrinsic value, fail to penetrate to the heart of his work if only because they ignore the formal strategies invoked by Faulkner. Similarly, the attempts, beginning with George Marion O'Donnell, to focus on Faulkner's morality, social criticism, or philosophy fall short of the mark. There is, of course, no doubt that ideas, moral judgment, and social criticism do exist in his work. Yet they too are part of the texture of the carpet as Faulkner himself implies when he states quite categorically that the character is more important than the idea and that "the writer is not really interested in bettering man's condition. . . . He's interested in all man's behavior with no judgment whatever." * In other words, moral and social dimensions emanate from the character and not vice versa.

Even the most casual of glances shows us that Faulkner's ability to create "flesh-and-blood people that will stand up and cast a shadow" is a prominent part of the figure in the carpet. The sense of the density and complexity of life, the tremendous range and variety of character in his works has not been equalled in American literature. The Sartorises, the Snopeses, the Compsons, and the McCaslins; young Temple Drake sowing her wild oats (if such a metaphor can be disengaged from the male sex) in a house of prostitution; Lena Grove serenely licking sardine oil from her fingers; Ike Snopes ambling after his beloved cow through the long, golden afternoon; Dilsey, Nancy Mannigoe, Ringo, T. P.—the list seems endless at least partly because even minor characters, merely rounding out a scene or two, clamor for the reader's attention and understanding.

That they do so is a result of Faulkner's concern with the possibilities—including self-contradiction—inherent in character. As he has stated: "Those characters to me are quite real and quite constant. They are in my mind all the time. I don't have any trouble at all going back to pick up one. I forget what they did, but the character I don't forget, and when the book is finished, that character is not done, he is still going on at some new devilment that sooner or later I will find out about and write about." In addition to this independence and ingenuity, these characters also have the delightful ability to create their own milieu by dragging in a number of people whom Faulkner claims he had never anticipated, had never seen or heard before. For example, Byron Snopes in *Sartoris*, writing lewd letters to Narcissa Benbow and absconding with the bank's cash, has called forth a whole swarm of Snopeses, including a senator, a murderer, an idiot, as well as his own spawn whose ingenious viciousness includes eating pedigreed dogs and attempting to burn one of their own kinsmen at the stake.

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* All quotations of Faulkner's personal opinions are from *Faulkner in the University*, eds. F. L. Gwynn and J. L. Blotner (Charlottesville, Va., 1959), and are reprinted here by permission of The University Press of Virginia.—Eds.

Clearly, then, Faulkner's major concern is not with manipulating his characters nor with documenting the stages in their development. Instead, having granted them their autonomy and having assumed that all men are capable of all things, he has concentrated on exploring and revealing their complexity. For instance, one first thinks of Boon Hogganbeck as the camp buffoon, the hunter incapable of hitting a barn door at twenty paces or the petulant child intent on protecting his tree full of squirrels from other hunters. Yet he is also the man who has enough courage and patience to tame Lion and enough love to avenge his injuries by killing Old Ben with only his knife for a weapon. Demanding a rarer courage as well as compassion and understanding is his willingness to help Sam Fathers fulfil his wish not to outlive Lion and Old Ben—a willingness that Shakespeare's Antony could not command in his faithful servant, Eros. In *The Reivers* Boon's marksmanship is once more presented in highly comic terms, but beyond that he achieves his final definition, surprisingly enough, as Yoknapatawpha's Don Quixote finding his Dulcinea in Everbe Corinthia, one of Miss Reba's girls, but without the good knight's subsequent disenchantment. For in the world of *The Reivers* the real and the ideal can be reconciled and so lead to the fairy tale conclusion of the marriage of Boon and Everbe.

Boon is, of course, representative of many of Faulkner's characters who disconcert critics looking for consistency and the logic of cause and effect. But Faulkner's indifference to such formal patterns of history frees him to recognize an integral, experiential unity which can encompass both change and apparent contradiction: "to me they are people, and they have grown older as I have grown older, and probably they have changed a little—my concept of them has changed a little, as they themselves have changed and I changed. That they have grown. I know more about people than I knew when I first thought of them, and they have become more definite to me as people." Accordingly, he as well as the reader may discover a latent characteristic that manifests itself only under the pressure of some new stimulus or situation. For example, there is development but no inconsistency in Gavin Stevens from *Light in August* to *Requiem for a Nun.* But in *The Town*, under the impact of Eula, herself transformed by her devotion to her child and de Spain, he discovers a hitherto unsuspected capacity for dreaming and for suffering the agony of frustration and failure.

Perhaps a more characteristic way of exploring the latent possibilities of character is Faulkner's repeated use of juxtaposed scenes involving either a lapse of time or a change of place, leading the reader to recognize both simultaneity and progression. Caddy, the child, getting her panties dirty or observing Nancy Mannigoe's mounting panic and despair in "That Evening Sun" coexists with "the ageless and beautiful, cold serene and damned mistress of a German staff general." And Nancy herself is at once the fearful wife whose infidelities have been discovered, the raucous voice that refuses to be stilled as it demands payment for services rendered from the Baptist deacon, the murderer of Temple Drake's child, and the embodiment of faith asking Temple only to "Believe."

Equally effective is Faulkner's technique of a fallible narrator or point of view figure who recognizes and attempts to correct his own mistakes in perception or his own limitations of understanding as the narrator does in "Hair." Or his use of multiple narrators who contradict, correct, supplement, and even invent, as they do in the Snopes trilogy. And finally, rhetoric itself can serve to modulate or transform the reader's view of a character. In "The Long Summer" the animal-like viciousness of Mink Snopes (suggested by his very name) is linked to his obsessive determination to revenge himself first on Houston and then on Flem. In *The Mansion* the comic horror of these scenes modulates into the vision, still comic but replacing horror with pathos, of his abortive escape from Parchman prison wearing a woman's dress and bonnet and of his later release. The smallness of his figure and his almost total ignorance of the world to which he has been readmitted introduce a childlike quality into his composite portrait, a child who must perform the act he has set himself though he has long ago forgotten his own reasons for so doing.

Yet if the limitless possibility of character is a striking and significant part of the Faulknerian carpet, equally important aspects are Faulkner's concern with both the personal identity and common humanity of his characters. The fascination exerted by the problem of identity is nowhere more graphically rendered than in those conscious, deliberate exercises in self-definition embarked upon by so many of Faulkner's characters.

Here we see another facet of the author's concern with human possibilities, for not only does he probe for the uniqueness, the quiddity of individuals, but he also charts the variety of ways in which the knowledge of identity both is and is not acquired. Chick Mallison, Isaac McCaslin, Lucas Beauchamp, Joe Christmas, and Charles Etienne Bon each in his own way exhibits the successes, the hazards, and the failures involved in human identity. But in each case identity is contingent upon a precise relationship to the common humanity of mankind. For Faulkner, common humanity seems to resolve itself into the capacity to aspire and so to choose acceptance, rejection, or evasion of the eternal verities—courage, honor, pride, compassion, pity. Because of his freedom to choose and because his identity is the sum of his choices, the individual character is both intricately woven into the warp and woof of the carpet and rendered in a variety of poses and actions that reflect their author's quizzical delight and curiosity at the products of their freedom: "the writer is learning all the time he writes and he learns from his own people, once he has conceived them truthfully and has stuck to the verities of human conduct, human behavior, human aspirations, then he learns—yes, they teach him, they surprise him, they teach him things that he didn't know."

If Faulkner is indeed concerned not only to explore the range of possibility in character but to probe for its essential humanity, no matter how shrivelled, he must have complete freedom to proceed in any order, in any temporal or spatial direction, and to recall and reexamine any action, situation, or character from a new perspective. Consequently, Faulkner experiments endlessly not because, like Henry James, he is interested in form and technique as values in themselves but because no single method can accomplish his purpose of rendering the unique figure of his carpet. The difference between the two is clear. James is the most conscious and consummately skilful craftsman America has ever produced; Faulkner is the dedicated student of human nature driven by the demon of compassionate curiosity to literary experimentation.

It follows, then, that Faulkner's interest in form and technique cannot be divorced from his interest in character, his determination —as in *Absalom, Absalom!* or *Light in August*—to make the reader aware simultaneously of consistency and contradiction, immersion in and transcendence of time, simplicity as well as complexity, depth as well as scope. To do this he resists any temptation to circumscribe, define, or interpret his characters from a position of authority since that would immediately destroy their autonomy. Thus, he goes a step beyond the Joycean artist who refines himself out of existence. In Faulkner authorial exclusion is replaced by authorial transcendence. The anonymous Voice so often detected in his fiction is the author seeing himself distanced or as one more perspective on the scene, one more legitimate but not conclusive point of view. It is also his mature version of the omniscient narrator founded upon the conviction that freedom for the self is freedom from the self. Throughout, his aim is to avoid limiting the freedom of character, reader, or author.

An apparent contradiction, often pointed out by critics, actually serves to support this view. Popeye, the cardboard figure, the two-dimensional character, the mechanical man, seems completely circumscribed, an impression supported by the awkwardly introduced "case history" summarizing his heredity and environment. But this Zolaesque tendency to "explain" is held in check by Faulkner's own and apparently instinctive desire to provoke simple curiosity. The sociological-psychological mold is broken as Popeye passively accepts death for a crime he can prove he has not committed. It is further shattered by his final words to his executioner "Fix my hair, Jack." In these gestures for the first time we are aware of the possibility of his having an interior world of emotions. Apparently in some inexplicable fashion, Temple Drake has had an impact on his life as well as on Goodwin's and Benbow's. The two gestures constitute an unexpected challenge to those who would too easily "pluck out the heart of [his] mystery."

Faulkner's proper concern, then, is to preserve the heart of the mystery by ordering his material to provide a maximum of concentration, illumination, and implication. In other words, Faulkner, the self-styled "failed poet," makes the short story and even the novel approximate poetry which he equates with the lyric and defines as "some moving, passionate moment of the human condition distilled to its absolute essence." Such an attempt does not simply demand "absolute exactitude," it also encourages the soaring design of rhetoric, the evocative condensation of imagery and symbolism, and the variety of textual richness as well as dramatic immediacy, all characteristic of Faulkner's style at its best.

In viewing the carpet one therefore moves inevitably from an awareness of vibrantly living characters to the perception of an intricately related series of lyrical stases. Individually these recall Keats' "Grecian Urn" capturing the essence of the moment, while collectively they constitute a modern prose equivalent to the Renaissance lyric cycle such as the *Amoretti*. It is with this that the place and significance of Faulkner's short stories in his total canon begin to emerge. In terms of content, we distinguish between stories, like "Turnabout," that are completely outside the Yoknapatawpha saga and those that contribute to it. The former serve as a variegated peripheral frieze that frames the panorama of the central saga. At the same time, the thematic and narrative similarities between such a story as "Honor" and the novel *Pylon*—both concerned with a bizarre solution to a sexual triangle—suggest the possibility of alternative or additional sagas that were never developed. It is, however, the Yoknapatawpha stories that show the threefold function of the short story in Faulkner: as a narrative unit in its own right, as an element of structure, and as a method of thematic and character exploration. These stories may be classified roughly as adjunctive, projective, and parodic. The first, the adjunctive, are stories that simply add more information about certain characters, situations, or the history of Yoknapatawpha County: for example, the MacCallum family in "The Tall Men," the Griers in "Two Soldiers" and "Shall Not Perish" or Miss Emily in "A Rose for Emily" and Miss Minnie Cooper in "Dry September." Others, such as "There Was a Queen" or "All the Dead Pilots," examine a new aspect of characters already established and so project new demands of action on the characters and new demands of understanding on the readers. Thus, the laughing face of Johnny Sartoris is replaced by an inarticulate, humorless man incapable of seeing the comic aspects of his rivalry with a superior officer for the favors of a girl so eager to accommodate all men that she is nicknamed "Kitchener." The final group, consisting mainly of the Indian stories, parodies the white man's follies and ways so as to counterpoint the design of the primary saga itself. A pair of useless red shoes serves as a symbol of status and authority; the wilderness and the vanished past form a subject of nostalgic reminiscence; while the "Negro question," that is, the question of his position in the Indian economy, is the subject of a hilarious debate over whether cannibalism offers a sensible solution to Negro fecundity. But most impressive as illumination through parody is the ritual pursuit of a Negro slave in "Red Leaves." The desperate terror, the agony, the pain of his gangrenous arm leap out of the scene with a dramatic immediacy that both points up and is underscored by the essentially comic view of his pursuers moving in their decorous, stately, untroubled course.

In addition to this pattern of content there is a pattern of form and structure. Its simplest element consists of a group of conventional stories depending on plot complication and action leading to some sort of resolution, as in "Dr. Martino," "The Brooch," or "Artist at Home." Since most of these stories are unrelated to the Yoknapatawpha saga and its techniques of presentation, they can be fairly viewed as providing a bold relief background for the scenes, actions, and characters that dominate the center of the carpet. A second group approximates the lyric insofar as it tends to focus on a single effect and a single impression. The emphasis is on situation rather than plot and revelation rather than definition of character. Typical of these are "A Rose for Emily" and "That Evening Sun," surely two of Faulkner's finest stories. In the latter, the situation is so vividly rendered and Nancy's fears so powerfully communicated that her death has, at times, been taken for granted and her corpse identified with the bones picked clean by buzzards in *The Sound and the Fury*. But in view of her disconcerting resurrection in *Requiem for a Nun*, a careful rereading discovers how much emphasis is placed on the foolishness of her fears. As in "That Evening Sun" so in "Dry September" or "Wash," Faulkner's refusal to dramatize the conclusive action serves both to intensify the dominant emotion and to project it beyond the story itself. In doing so it lends credence to his conviction that his characters' lives extend beyond the formal confines of individual works. The result is that certain ambiguities and uncertainties remain unresolved. Unanswered questions persist as to the fate of young Sartoris Snopes fleeing from his barn-burning father, Dewey Dell still carrying her child as the Bundren family begins its homeward journey, or Byron Bunch patiently loving Lena Grove.

With the third type of story, a new element in the design of Faulkner's carpet can now be detected. In addition to living characters and frozen moments of concentrated emotion, the carpet also contains a series of recurring designs. For, surprisingly enough in view of his concern with freedom, the third kind of story is formulaic. Faulkner describes its genesis and function to a University of Virginia student: "there are so few plots and what you read—the plot has not changed too much, only the people involved in it have changed, and to see this same plot repeated time after time with different people motivated by it or trying to cope with it, you can learn about people that way, to match against your own experience with living people." What would seem to reveal a paucity of imagination becomes in his hands a highly sophisticated technique, a most subtle method of exploring character and delineating its uniqueness. The formula is born of curiosity meeting the challenge to human freedom and imaginatively evoking characters whose vibrancy animates and fleshes out the pattern resident in the human situation.

The formula is of two main types, each of which possesses three subtypes of variants. And since each is capable of interrelation, there are at least nine possible formulaic modes. The first main pattern is that of the contest, whether involving cards, horses, or women. If emphasis is placed on the formal aspect of the contest—the complicated moves and countermoves of a card game, the intricate maneuvers of bargaining, the wild ingenuity of sexual rivals—and if the opponents are evenly matched, the result is likely to be comic. Thus, in "Flem," Ab Snopes, before he became soured, and Pat Stamper are so evenly matched in ingenuity and so obviously enjoying their contest that the elaborate swapping of horses and mules and even milk separators is hilariously funny.

In contrast Miss Rosa's ability in "Raid" to dupe the Yankees into providing her with a steady stream of mules fuses the comic with the heroic. The increasing stakes in "Was" ultimately involving the fate of a confirmed bachelor, a frustrated spinster, and two Negro slaves introduce an element of irony. Of greater mordancy is the game of checkers between Mink and Lump Snopes in "The Long Summer" played in an atmosphere of macabre humor and nightmare pressure. It is, however, "Spotted Horses," the most famous of Faulkner's horse trade stories, pitting amateurs against professionals and introducing the themes of greed and exploitation, that offers the widest range of tone. The absurdity of the situation, the irrational behavior of the participants and the exaggerated humor of incident are qualified by the pathetic suffering of Mrs. Armstid, the horrifying transformation of her husband, and the accidental involvement of Tull and his family. Thus, the simple formula is made to yield a complex insight into human behavior, morality, responsibility, and justice.

The final version of the contest formula involves some form of sexual rivalry. The Queen Bee—the irresistible, elusive she—as exemplified by Mink Snopes's wife making a private harem out of her father's lumber camp is broadly comic. But as Eula Varner unleashes a frenzy of desire and frustration in the young men of Frenchman's Bend, comedy is fused with myth and symbol; while as Temple Drake alternates between provocation and retreat, the dominant tone is horror. The classic triangle, like the mass pursuit, also appears in many guises. In "A Courtship," Herman Basket's sister marries her uncompetitive suitor while the other two are busily engaged in eating and racing contests.

When the triangle involves adultery, the range of response becomes more complex. In "Centaur in Brass" Tom Tom farcically chases

Turl, his wife's lover, until both fall breathlessly into a ditch and reestablish their friendship and male solidarity. In "Wild Palms," however, the attempt of Charlotte's husband to help the man who has not only run away with but also inadvertently killed his wife is developed not as knockabout comedy but as shrill, highly-colored melodrama. And beyond it, the basic triangle reappears in *Pylon* as the continuing *ménage à trois* in which not even Laverne knows who has fathered her child. Here melodramatic situation is used to develop with the artless simplicity of a morality play the theme of paternity as an emotional and moral rather than legal commitment. When adultery is set in a racial context, the formula develops added ramifications including those of ambiguity and uncertainty. Thus Lucas Beauchamp regains his wife from Zack Carothers in "The Fire and the Hearth" and simultaneously recognizes that his victory may be transitory. And at the furthest extreme from the comic there is the unrelieved horror of incest compounded by miscegenation in "The Bear" as Ike relives the scene of old Carothers McCaslin calling his Negro daughter to his bed.

The other main formula used by Faulkner is the hunt in which the prime objects are buried treasure, wild game, or human beings. In the first the mood may range from that of pure comedy to that of sober moral reflection. Thus, as engaged in by Lucas Beauchamp, the search for buried treasure provides a wide spectrum of humor. But a similar hunt contrived by Flem Snopes results in a shattering experience for the Armstid family and a chastening one for Ratliff. Accordingly, both the victim and the victimizer evoke a horror which replaces the original comic response.

In contrast the ritual pursuit of game is almost always treated seriously though the mode may vary from heroic to elegiac to low mimetic. The heroic culminates in the poetic rhetoric of "The Bear," where through Sam Fathers, Isaac McCaslin, Old Ben, and Lion, the story acquires a symbolic universality, testing not only courage but humility and integrity. The elegiac counterpart of this is "Delta Autumn," where the aged Isaac watches the wilderness receding and the hunters refusing to discriminate between worthy game and does and fawns. On the periphery are stories in the low mimetic mode such as "A Bear Hunt," which degenerates into a private joke, or "A Fox Hunt" in which a cuckolded husband relieves his jealousy and mounting frustration by chasing a fox and finally killing it in a particularly brutal fashion.

The final object of pursuit, that of another human being, may be sought with two different aims. The hunt is to issue either in death, as with lynching or scapegoat tales, or in life, as with the Reluctant Lover stories. And in either case they too range from comedy to tragedy. The vigorous chase of Tomey's Turl by Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy parodying the lynch tale is comic because there is no possibility of violence or death. Comedy through parody is also used in "Red Leaves." Unhurried, patient, and meticulous about the rules to be followed, the Negro's Indian pursuers prefer to wait for their quarry to surrender rather than to track him down. In "Dry September" and "Pantaloon in Black" as well as *Light in August* and *Intruder in the Dust*, humor is either entirely absent or reduced to a caustic irony, for here there is no parody, only naked inhumanity to man.

The human being may also, however, be sought for sexual ends and when he or she is, Faulkner offers brilliant variations on the theme of the Obsessed and Reluctant Lover. The obsessed lover, as in "Eula," frequently plays a complementary role to the Queen Bee. But he is also seen in Philip St. Just Backhouse ("My Grandmother Millard") overcoming Melisandre's modesty, Hawkshaw ("Hair") patiently waiting for his Susan Reed to grow up, or Ike ("The Long Summer") happily following his beloved cow. When the obsessed lover is a woman, humor is replaced by an intensity bordering on hysteria, whether it involves Miss Emily's ("A Rose for Emily") bizarre manner of claiming Homer Baron for her own, Miss Elly's ("Elly") efforts to kill herself and the recalcitrant Paul Montigny, or Joanna Burden's pursuing Joe Christmas through her garden. The obsessed lover may also find that his obsession does not prevent him from feeling reluctant to satisfy it because of fear of involvement, difficulty of removing ingrained conviction, or apprehension over the loss of dignity, detachment, and simple male freedom. The strategies of evasion may encompass Houston's departure from Jefferson, Labove's attempted rape which will permit him to be forceful instead of humbly tentative, or the Reporter's conviction that he can become part of Laverne's world without sexual involvement. Depending on his character, then, we may feel a greater or lesser degree of sympathy for the lover, but we are rarely if ever free of a sense of the absurdity with which his obsession and his evasions surround him.

Broadly speaking, these formula stories, whether separate units or episodes within novels, contribute three major qualities. First, there is the revelation of character as in "Dry September," "Death Drag," or "The Bear." Then, there is the recurrence of patterns as in "Centaur in Brass," "A Courtship," and "Artist at Home," each of which issues in a reconciliation of husband and lover. And finally there is the diversity of tones modulating a central theme or subject as with love stories as various as "My Grandmother Millard," "Divorce in Naples," and "The Long Summer." The first of these qualities reiterates in a graphic, sketch-like fashion the centrality of character and personal identity. The second—the perception of the recurrence of a relatively limited number of patterns of human action—introduces into the Faulknerian design the perdurable limiting conditions of human existence. We become aware of our common humanity through perceiving the anatomical similarities of skeletons. Or, to put it another way, because in one sense there are so few courses of human action and they are pursued so repetitively, we see both the limitations of life and its ritualistic significance as the embodier of the eternal verities. If this awareness of recurring patterns suggests a straitening of human freedom and variety in the Faulknerian design, it is more than offset by the third quality, that of the brilliant diversity of tones exhibited in and through the formulas. By varying his tone and attitude from comedy through irony, heroism, pathos, and elegy to tragedy, Faulkner reveals in a deeper light the true nature of human freedom. It consists not so much in limitless opportunities for all conceivable actions as in an infinite variety of responses to those actions which man either can or must perform. In short, the diversity of tones constitutes that virtually unparalleled range of shading and color which amazes and delights every viewer of Faulkner's carpet.

This somewhat lengthy discussion of the types of short story simplifies our consideration of the novels, since the short story for Faulkner is not only a genre but an element of structure. Like Poe, Faulkner believes that "unless a book follows a simple direct line such as a story of adventure, it becomes a series of pieces." The author's function, then, is to exercise his "judgment and taste to arrange the different pieces in the most effective place in juxtaposition to one another." It is therefore possible to argue, as Malcolm Cowley does, that all of Faulkner's novels reveal some structural weakness, some absence of unity, that he has no talent for sustained narrative and hence his reputation will eventually rest on his superbly-structured short stories.

But it is also possible to assert that such criticism is irrelevant in that it uses the criteria of the well-made novel in discussing a form which deliberately rejects that particular tradition. In other words, Faulkner was creating a new form which would suit his own purpose:

> You write a story to tell about people, man in his constant struggle with his own heart, with the hearts of others, or with his environment. It's man in the ageless, eternal struggles which we inherit and we go

> through as though they'd never happened before, shown for a moment in a dramatic instant of the furious motion of being alive, that's all any story is. You catch this fluidity which is human life and you focus a light on it and you stop it long enough for people to be able to see it.

Clearly the light focused and held is one of the structural principles underlying the literary form evolved by Faulkner. In virtually all his works there arc scenes which dramatically render a character's individuality so powerfully and unforgettably that they are climactic moments regardless of where they occur in the narrative. It is this principle which Faulkner developed out of the short story, with its emphasis on the single incident or character scrupulously revealed in a specific but universal moment of its history. At the same time he recognized that there was more to fiction than dramatic scenes involving individual human beings: "I mean that love and money and death are the skeletons on which the story is laid. They have nothing to do with the aspirations and the conflicts of the human hearts involved. But the story has got to have some skeleton, and the skeletons are love or money or death." The skeleton, then, is Faulkner's other structural principle, the one which provides the varieties of narrative development out of which emerge the recurrent themes and the characters' link with "man in the ageless, eternal struggles." When the two principles are united, Faulkner's new literary form takes shape. It is seen most obviously in his story-novels: *The Unvanquished*, *The Hamlet*, *Go Down, Moses*, and *Knight's Gambit*. Recognition of their structural principles—recurring thematic and narrative patterns and dramatic instants of unique character—permits the reader to grasp the true relation of their parts and to avoid finding nothing but what Malcolm Cowley has called "a series of beads on a string."

Closely related to the story-novel is the novel of formal juxtaposition as found in *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*. But instead of focusing on a significant action, the emphasis is placed on a single, fixed attitude or state of mind, revealing itself through interior monologues as it responds to certain focal experiences in the past as well as to the demanding present. Each member of the Bundren family, for example, reacts in his own individual manner to Addie's death and to the crisis of the funeral journey just as each of the Compson brothers copes with the present while he reveals himself as in some sense molded by his past response to Caddy and her loss of virginity. The brilliant juxtaposition of psychological perspectives enables Faulkner to introduce and reinforce certain obvious comparisons and contrasts, to provide an infinite number of variations, and to achieve an incredible richness of texture and shading. To use but one example, Jason Compson's compulsive greed for money is juxtaposed against Quentin's guilt about the financial sacrifice involved in his attending Harvard, Benjy's loss of his beloved pasture, Dilsey's serene indifference as to whether or not Jason pays her, and Luster's anxious search for the lost quarter which will enable him to attend a travelling show.

When we turn to the counterpoint novels such as *The Wild Palms*, *Requiem for a Nun*, and *Light in August* (which, however, also bears certain resemblances to the next type), the separateness of the stories is deliberately stressed. The very absence of narrative bridges creates that sustained comparison and contrast which leads to recognition of the uniqueness of character. It also bears in upon us in tentative, hypothetical fashion the possible metaphysical and metahistorical significance of the pattern in the carpet. It does so through recurring but sudden glimpses of the relation of identity and diversity, of the particular and the universal. Whether we call it point and counterpoint or theme and variation, the balancing of disparate stories is necessary in order to prevent a definitive, completed statement of theme or a single, sustained tone, which, in effect, would limit or predetermine the reader's response.

Thus, in *The Wild Palms* the romantic love of Henry and Charlotte results in a mismanaged abortion, her death, and his imprisonment. The emotional impact of their love is balanced by the Tall Convict, the ultimate version of the Reluctant Lover, forced into responsibility for a pregnant woman whom he does not know, love, or desire. Tragedy and comedy; abortion and death as well as birth and life; prison as punishment and prison as reward: the evocative parallels can, of course, be multiplied. And yet they are without point unless the material's diversity is also fully recognized. Alternation between opposing character attitudes (as in *The Wild Palms*), differing authorial points of view (as in *Requiem for a Nun*), or disparate concepts (as in *Light in August*), all point up striking variations in surface configurations and multilevelled clashing planes much after the manner of a Cézanne or cubist painting. The aim is simultaneously a perception of hitherto unnoticed similarities and a renewed awareness of the incontrovertible differences that inhere both in the physical and in the more broadly human worlds.

Unlike the other counterpoint novels, *Light in August* does connect its three stories through plot, though only tangentially. But the real richness and coherence of this novel is due rather to its recurrent scapegoat pattern with its evocation of myth and religion. In the same way the angular contrasts of diversity, providing a broad spectrum between the poles of life and death, are seen in the characters' varied sexual relationships as well as the latter's conceptual clash with the religious modes of the novel.

The final distinguishable form, one that is among Faulkner's most original and certainly most misunderstood, is what (for lack of a better word) I have called the "fused" novel. It combines the virtues of the short story, possessing its own "unity and coherence, the proper emphasis and integration, which a long chronicle doesn't have" with the illusion of the density and of the complexity of life typical of the novel proper. This form attempts either to incorporate already existent stories or to make the illuminative but embryonic or potential story an integral part of the novel. As a separate story, for example, "Barn Burning" emphasizes the vengefulness of Ab Snopes and the agony of the child, Sartoris Snopes, who can neither approve of nor betray his father. When the tale recurs in *The Hamlet*, it is narrated by Ratliff with his usual sardonic humor. Sartoris is not mentioned and the viciousness of Ab is transferred to Mink. What remains is a comic story which stresses the mounting frustration of de Spain, the imperturbability of Ab, and an indirect warning to Will Varner, his son Jody, and Frenchman's Bend. In addition it is precisely because Jody hears the story that he begins that process of placating Flem that leads to his own dispossession. The integration of the story into a larger unit is thus completed.

On the other hand, the use of the embryonic or potential short story is most clearly seen in *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin and Shreve provide the novel's formal unity by their concern to explore the past as seen in the history of the Sutpen family. But there are at least three different accounts of Sutpen which could stand independently. In addition, because Quentin and Shreve are attempting an aesthetic reconstruction, they tend to think in terms of scenes and episodes: Miss Rosa's reaction to Sutpen's brutal proposal, Charles Etienne's tragic inability to define himself racially, Wash Jones and his granddaughter Milly, Sutpen's adventures in Haiti, Charles Bon's doomed relationship with his mistress. Yet one is not conscious of the separateness of these stories because they are caught up in the fluidity of time and because they are an integral part of the total pattern of the book.

These unremitting efforts at formal experimentation testify to Faulkner's passionate effort to enshrine in his carpet the full quiddity of the living character, the lyrical exaltation of the moment that epitomizes, the sobering (even when most humorous) recognition of the unsought recurrence of human actions, and the emancipatory release afforded by the diversity of tones. Perhaps most important of all, in their integrating the dramatic immediacy and concentration of the short story with the sweep of sustained narrative, his efforts reveal a carpet that reconciles what George Steiner in *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky* has described as antithetical if not mutually exclusive traditions of fiction. To summarize from Mr. Steiner's long list of contrarieties: Faulkner, like Dostoevski, distrusts reason and loves paradox, distrusts total understanding and seeks to preserve some element of mystery, plunges into the labyrinth of the unnatural and the morass of the soul, and hovers on the edge of the hallucinatory, of the spectral, always vulnerable to daemonic intrusions into what might prove, in the end, to have been merely a tissue of dreams. On the other hand, like Tolstoy, he is the poet of the land and of the rural setting, the man thirsting for the truth and engaging in excessive pursuit of it, the writer evoking the realness, the tangibility, the sensible entirety of concrete experience. Admittedly, to assert Faulkner is both a Tolstoy and a Dostoevski is a large claim, but so is his achievement.

That he was able to risk and still to achieve so much brings us full circle to "The Figure in the Carpet," to "the very passion of his passion" that is the unifying principle for all his works. The one indispensable element that seems best to explain the characteristics identified in the preceding pages is, put most simply, the inquiring mind, that quizzical, reflective prober of persons, places, and things who simultaneously ventures into the unknown and interrogates the known. To use his own words once more: "The most important thing is insight, that is, to be—curiosity—to wonder, to mull, and to muse why it is that man does what he does." It is at this point that author, character, and reader meet and see their own image reflected each in the other and in the carpet. In this we can see perhaps why the Yoknapatawpha saga remains incomplete necessarily and not simply because of Faulkner's death. For each new reader, each new critic who takes up Faulkner's task of wondering, musing and mulling, and each new interpretation that proves less than definitive is in some sense a contribution to the saga as well as a tribute to its founder.

The Wilderness and the Negro in Faulkner's "The Bear"

MELVIN BACKMAN

THE HEART OF *Go Down, Moses* (1942) is "The Bear." The most widely acclaimed story of the seven in the volume, "The Bear" has received a variety of interpretations. One critic has emphasized its New Testament spirit, others its romantic and transcendental character, and still others its primitivism and myth.[1] The variety of critical response testifies to the story's density of meaning. It is a rich, original story treating of a universal issue; nevertheless, it is distinctly American. Lionel Trilling has placed it in the romantic, transcendental tradition of Cooper, Thoreau, and Melville, while Malcolm Cowley has associated it with the work of Mark Twain. In its pastoral spirit "The Bear" does seem related to *Huck Finn;* and, in its development of the wilderness theme, to

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[1] See R. W. B. Lewis, "The Hero in the New World: William Faulkner's 'The Bear'," *Kenyon Review*, XIII (Autumn 1951), 641–660; Lionel Trilling, "The McCaslins of Mississippi," *The Nation*, CLIV (30 May 1942), 632–633; Irving D. Blum, "The Parallel Philosophy of Emerson's 'Nature' and Faulkner's 'The Bear'," *Emerson Society Quarterly*, No. 13 (4th Quart., 1958), 22–25; Malcolm Cowley, "Go Down to Faulkner's Land," *The New Republic*, CVI (29 June 1942), 000; Harry Modean Campbell and Ruel E. Foster, *William Faulkner: A Critical Appraisal* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1951), pp. 146–158; Kenneth LaBudde, "Cultural Primitivism in William Faulkner's 'The Bear'," *American Quarterly*, II (Winter 1950), 322–328; William Van O'Connor, "The Wilderness Theme in Faulkner's 'The Bear'," *Accent*, XIII (Winter 1953), 12–20; W. R. Moses, "Where History Crosses Myth: Another Reading of 'The Bear'," *Accent*, XIII (Winter 1953), 21–33; and Otis B. Wheeler, "Faulkner's Wilderness," *American Literature*, XXXI (May 1959), 127–136; Herbert A. Perluck, "'The Heart's Driving Complexity': An Unromantic Reading of Faulkner's 'The Bear'," *Accent*, XX (Winter 1960), 23–46.

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Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales.*[2] Yet because of the story's tendency to split into two parts—one part concerned with the wilderness, the other with the Negro—the structure of the story has seemed faulty and its meaning ambiguous. If "The Bear" is examined within the context of the other related stories of the *Go Down, Moses* volume, its meaning may be clarified.

The first story, "Was," is a warmly humorous introduction to some of the old McCaslins, white and black, before the Civil War. The next two stories, "The Fire and the Hearth" and "Pantaloon in Black," turn their focus upon the Negro. But the following three stories—"The Old People," "The Bear," and "Delta Autumn"—shift to Isaac McCaslin and the wilderness. The last story, "Go Down, Moses," returns to the Negro. The movement of the *Go Down, Moses* volume is from surface to depth, from comedy to tragedy, and from the ante-bellum past to the present about the beginning of the Second World War. The subject of *Go Down, Moses* is apparently the Negro or the wilderness, although in "The Bear" they are strangely merged. This merging of the Negro and the wilderness suggests that "The Bear" is not only the heart but also the climax of *Go Down, Moses*, since this collection of stories about the black and white descendants of the McCaslin clan of the last century is telling, in a sense, of the making of the conscience of Isaac McCaslin. It seems appropriate, therefore, to begin this study of "The Bear" with a discussion of the Negro, particularly as he emerges in "The Fire and the Hearth," and later, after a close consideration of "The Bear" itself, to conclude with Faulkner's final commentary on the wilderness and the Negro in "Delta Autumn" and "Go Down, Moses."

"The Fire and the Hearth" is concerned with two themes (1) the Negro-white relationship and (2) family love. Its hero is the Negro, Lucas Beauchamp. Lucas was a proud Negro who had fought for his rights as a man. There was the time he went to fetch his wife from the white man's house where she had gone six months ago to deliver and nurse the white child, Roth Edmonds. Lucas confronted Zack Edmonds, his white kinsman and landlord: " 'I'm a nigger. . . . But I'm a man too. I'm more than just a man. The same thing made my pappy that made your grandmaw. I'm going to take her back'" (p. 47).[3] She came back. But six months of jealous brooding had driven a hot iron into Lucas' pride. The next night he went to the white man's house to kill his kinsman. They had once lived as brothers: "they had fished and hunted together, they had learned to swim in the same water, they had eaten at the same table in the white boy's kitchen and in the cabin of the negro's mother; they had slept under the same blanket before a fire in the woods" (p. 55). But that was long ago. Now Lucas was protesting against the white man's prerogative over the black man's wife. That he was wrong in his suspicions is beside the point. He had to protest in order to assert the manhood that Southern heritage denied the Negro.

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[2] Ursula Brumm has commented on the relationship between Cooper and Faulkner, particularly in regard to the wilderness theme and the affinity between Sam Fathers and Natty Bumppo. See Ursula Brumm, "Wilderness and Civilization: A Note on William Faulkner," *Partisan Review*, XXII (Summer 1955), 340–350.

The fire in the hearth which Lucas had lit on his wedding day in 1895 "was to burn on the hearth until neither he nor Molly were left to feed it" (p. 47). This fire is symbolic of love. It is not the kind of love that Faulkner treated in *The Wild Palms* or *The Hamlet;* it is more akin to the warm affection that bound the MacCallum family together in *Sartoris*. In *Sartoris* that love was associated with life; its absence, as illustrated in Bayard's self-destructive course, with death. In "The Fire and the Hearth" love is threatened and invaded by the inherited curse which separates black from white.

The "old curse" (p. 111) descended too upon the next generation—on Roth, the son of Zack, and Henry, the son of Lucas. For seven years the boys had played together, eaten together, and slept together—the white boy even preferring the Negro cabin with its ever-burning fire—until one night the white boy had insisted that Henry sleep separately in the pallet below the bed. That night the white boy lay "in a rigid fury of the grief he could not explain, the shame he would not admit" (p. 112). They never slept again in the same room nor ate at the same table. The price for white supremacy was shame and loss of love.

Both as a boy and man, Roth Edmonds is characterized by the deprivation of love. The only mother he had ever known was the little Negress, Molly. It was she

> who had raised him, fed him from her own breast as she was actually doing her own child, who had surrounded him always with care for his physical body and for his spirit too, teaching him his manners, behavior—to be gentle with his inferiors, honorable with his equals, generous to the weak and considerate of the aged, courteous, truthful and

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[3] *Go Down, Moses* (New York: Modern Library, 1955); page references are to this edition.

> brave to all—who had given him, the motherless, without stint or expectation of reward that constant and abiding devotion and love which existed nowhere else in this world for him. (p. 117)

He had lived his early life in the Negro cabin where "a little fire always burned, centering the life in it, to his own" (p. 110). Living as brother to Henry, he had wanted "only to love . . . and to be let alone" (p. 111). But that was his lost childhood which he had to foresake for the prerogatives of his Southern heritage. Southern heritage denied the black brother Roth's love and denied the white boy his brother's and mother's love. Faulkner's concern over this deprivation of love is not new, for "the tragic complexity of . . . motherless childhood" (pp. 130–131) echoes through Faulkner's novels. Many of his isolated and defeated protagonists—Quentin Compson, Joe Christmas, Joanna Burden, Gail Hightower, and Charles Bon—are marked by a motherless childhood. Behind the malaise and violence in Faulkner's works is the lost affection of childhood. But in *Go Down, Moses* the love that has been destroyed is the brotherhood between black and white.

The nostalgia for a lost love and innocence is central to "The Bear" too, although it has been enriched and transfigured in this story of the wilderness, since Faulkner has made use of a theme—a point of view, in fact—deeply embedded in American literature. In the conscious and unconscious memory of the American writer, the woods and river have loomed large because of their associations with a primitive and natural existence, free from the restraints and corruption of civilization. For Cooper the wilderness retained a primeval beauty and calm, though the simple, heroic Indians and Natty Bumppo had to yield to the destructive and possessive settlers. Based in part on the American frontier experience, the nostalgia for a primitive past seems to derive chiefly, however, from the author's own needs. This nostalgia often turns back to one's childhood—as if searching consciously for a lost innocence and freedom, and unconsciously for a lost peace. It is clearly evident in *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn*. In *Tom Sawyer* the golden age of life is the carefree, joyous summertime of boyhood. In *Huck Finn* a boy and a slave, rafting down the friendly Mississippi, establish a brief idyll of peace and natural fellowship; but from the land come the representatives of civilization, armed with greed and deceit and violence, to shatter the idyll. The same opposition between nature and civilization, the same desire to retreat to an earlier, more natural way of life is apparent in "The Bear."

For the orphan Isaac McCaslin his true home would become the wilderness; his true father an old Indian who, quitting the plantation, returned to the wilderness whence he had derived. There as a self-appointed guardian of the woods Sam Fathers was to live out his remaining years. But already—it was 1877—the woods were "that doomed wilderness whose edges were being constantly and punily gnawed at by men with plows and axes who feared it because it was wilderness" (p. 193). In the face of its inevitable destruction, the old Indian trained the boy for initiation into the wilderness as though he were its priest and the boy the novitiate. But if Sam Fathers was the priest of the wilderness, Old Ben was its chief. To pass the ordeal of initiation the boy would have to win acceptance from the chief. To accomplish this the boy had to shed the instruments and symbols of civilization: the gun, watch, and compass. He had to conquer his fear, discipline his will, and, finally, like a humble suppliant before his god, surrender himself completely to the wilderness. The boy's communion was confirmed by the silent, mystical appearance of Old Ben.

Not long after the boy's initiation Sam Fathers found the dog who was brave enough, worthy enough to hunt the old bear. The dog possessed the hunter's fierce implacability—"the will and desire to pursue and kill . . . to endure beyond all imaginable limits of flesh in order to overtake and slay" (p. 237)—that had been "ordered and compelled by and within the wilderness" (pp. 191–192). This was the dog—they had named him Lion—who would be pitted against the bear in the last great hunt. These two kings of beasts seemed the sole surviving representatives of the ancient hunt and life of the wilderness. In the hunt that brooked no quarter, death was inevitable. The boy knew it, yet he did not hate Lion. "It seemed to him that there was a fatality in it. It seemed to him that something, he didn't know what, was beginning; had already begun. It was like the last act on a set stage. It was the beginning of the end of something" (p. 226). Despite these apprehensions he did not fully realize that the death of Old Ben signified the impending death of the wilderness. But Sam knew it. When Old Ben went down, "as a tree falls" (p. 241), "the old man, the wild man not even one generation from the woods, childless, kinless, peopleless" (p. 246) prepared to die too.

Joining Lion in its attack upon the bear was the halfbreed Indian, Boon Hogganbeck, who followed the dog as if Lion were his totem and represented his almost forsaken Indian heritage. Boon's killing of Old Ben entitles him to glory, but it has involved him too in the white man's guilt in the destruction of the woods. Boon served Major de Spain and McCaslin Edmonds. It was men like these who were destroying the wilderness—the Major by selling the woods to the lumber interests, McCaslin by clearing its borders in order to build farms and fill his bank's coffers. Great hunter for the moment, Boon was also an unwitting instrument of the wilderness' destruction. Of this the boy was dimly aware; hence he stood apart from the action of the hunt, as if his will to act were paralyzed by his conflicting identification with both the hunted and the hunter. The ambivalence of the boy is embedded in the story itself, so that though "The Bear" celebrates the glory of the hunt, it mourns elegiacally the passing of the wilderness.

Implicit in the story is the dream of the wilderness as idyllic retreat, as an escape from the outside world to a reassuring but solitary peace. Like the river in *Huck Finn*, the woods in "The Bear" represents a retreat for a boy and a man, and like the river's idyll it was doomed to extinction by civilization. For Isaac McCaslin the woods came, more and more, to signify escape from woman, from the world and struggle. The figures to whom he surrendered, Old Ben and Sam Fathers, were solitary old bachelors identified with the wilderness. It was the wilderness that he embraced, the land that he repudiated. He had to repudiate, he explained to his cousin McCaslin Edmonds, because the land that did not belong to his father or grandfather or even Ikkemotubbe could not be bequeathed to him.

> Because He told in the Book how He created the earth, made it and looked at it and said it was all right, and then He made man. He made the earth first and peopled it with dumb creatures, and then He created man to be His overseer on the earth and to hold suzerainty over the earth and the animals on it in His name, not to hold for himself and his descendants inviolable title forever, generation after generation, to the oblongs and squares of the earth, but to hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood. (p. 257)

For Isaac the golden age was the wilderness time when men lived as brothers before they had become tainted by the greed for possession. This primitivistic communism is not a new idea in Faulkner's works. In "Lo" (1935) an Indian reminded the President that "God's forest and the deer which He put in it belong to all"; in Thomas Sutpen's mountain home "the land belonged to anybody and everybody"; in "Retreat" (1938) Buck and Buddy McCaslin believed that "land did not belong to people but that people belonged to land." But it remained for Isaac McCaslin to develop this idea into a philosophy for life.[4] This philosophy ran absolutely counter to that of his ancestor, old Carothers. Carothers "took the land, got the land no matter how, held it to bequeath, no matter how, out of the old grant, the first patent, when it was a wilderness of wild beasts and wilder men, and cleared it, translated it into something to bequeath to his children, worthy of bequeathment for his descendants' ease and security and pride and to perpetuate his name and accomplishments" (p. 256). All that old Carothers represented Isaac was repudiating.

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[4] Despite the relationship of this philosophy to the Indian and frontier point of view, the philosophy may stem from Rousseau's "Discourse on Inequality." Rousseau wrote: "The first man, who, after enclosing a piece of

However, that he repudiated out of his belief in God's communistic scheme seems a rationalization of a more deeply rooted motive. He was driven to repudiation by the guilt inherited from the McCaslin sin against the Negro, a sin that had long since tainted the land. He first became aware of this sin when he was a boy of sixteen. In the "rank chill midnight room" (p. 271) of the McCaslin commissary he pored over the entries on the yellowed pages of the old ledgers. He was learning about his black kin: Eunice, who drowned herself in the creek on Christmas Day, 1832; Tomey, her daughter, who died in childbirth six months later; and the son Terrel, who was born in Tomey's death. Tomey's Terrel had been marked down in old Carothers' will for a thousand dollar legacy. Yes, Isaac thought, his grandfather had found it cheaper to give a thousand dollars than to say "My son to a nigger" (p. 269). And Isaac thought of the young girl, Tomey: had there been any love between the old man and her, or had it been "just an afternoon's or a night's spittoon" (p. 270)? Suddenly he realized the truth: his grandfather had taken not only his slave but also "his own daughter" (p. 270). He knew now why Eunice had drowned herself. He saw that the McCaslin chronicle "was a whole land in miniature, which multiplied and compounded was the entire South" (p. 293), the "whole edifice . . . founded upon injustice and erected by ruthless rapacity and carried on even yet with at times downright savagery" (p. 298). The Southern planters "were all Grandfather" (p. 283). They had denied the heart's rights to their black kin; they had

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ground, took it into his head to say, 'This is mine,' and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. How many crimes, how many wars, how many murders, how many misfortunes and horrors, would that man have saved the human species, who pulling up the stakes or filling up the ditches should have cried to his fellows: Be sure not to listen to this imposter; you are lost, if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong equally to us all, and the earth itself to nobody!" Compare Faulkner's remark in *Absalom, Absalom!* (Modern Library, p. 221): "Where he [the boy Thomas Sutpen] lived the land belonged to anybody and everybody and so the man who would go to the trouble and work to fence off a piece of it and say 'This is mine' was crazy."

sold themselves to rapacity. Where were the "humility and pity and sufferance and pride of one to another" (p. 258) upon which God had founded and granted the new world to man? These virtues were part of the dream to which Isaac clung desperately in the face of his knowledge of the South's miscegenation and incest.

In Faulkner's novels incest tragically complicates the lives of his heroes and forces them to decisions that determine the course of their own and their descendants' lives. Quentin Compson yielded to the incestuous attraction of his sister Caddy; the result was his death by suicide. Charles Bon decided to marry his white sister; the result was his death by murder. Bayard Sartoris ("An Odor of Verbena") resisted his stepmother's offer of herself; the result was life and increased moral strength. Old Carothers took his slavedaughter Tomey; the result was the sin that oppressed his descendants' conscience. Incest and miscegenation are deeply rooted in the Southern past; they have evolved from the white planter's freedom with his woman slaves and have produced his double family—black and white. The white planter and his offspring were enmeshed in tragic conflicts and contradictions. On one hand, the South, with its emphasis upon family and honor, promoted strong familial bonds and obligations; on the other hand, the South refused to accord family status and love to a white man's black offspring. The black man's life was tragically scarred; the white man's conscience was grievously burdened.

To make a life of their own the black grandchildren of old Carothers abandoned the plantation in the 1880's. Tennie's Jim vanished forever somewhere in Tennessee in December 1885; seven months later Fonsiba went off with an educated Negro; only Lucas stayed on the plantation. To fulfill his grandfather's will and to ease his own conscience, Isaac went in search of Fonsiba. He found her living with her scholar-husband in Midnight, Arkansas. They were living with their delusion of freedom in a cold and empty cabin on an unfenced piece of jungle land. For Isaac these Negroes who had abandoned the plantation to embrace freedom and education were dwelling in darkness and delusion, as well as misery and poverty. It was twenty-two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, and still they were not free.

Neither was Isaac free, even after his repudiation of the cursed land in 1889. He had to repudiate, he told his cousin McCaslin, "because I have got myself to have to live with for the rest of my life and all I want is peace to do it in" (p. 288). But there was no peace. At the same time that Isaac was seeking to atone for the inherited sin, he was paralyzingly aware of the futility of his repudiation. Underlying his noble words is a sense of desperation and grieving helplessness. He cried out to Fonsiba's husband:

> Don't you see? This whole land, the whole South, is cursed, and all of us who derive from it, whom it ever suckled, white and black both, lie under the curse? Granted that my people brought the curse onto the land: maybe for that reason their descendants alone can—not resist it, not combat it—maybe just endure and outlast it until the curse is lifted. Then your peoples' turn will come because we have forfeited ours. But not now. Not yet. Don't you see? (p. 278)

To the question of how long the land would be cursed, Isaac replied to McCaslin: "It will be long. . . . But it will be all right because they [the Negroes] will endure" (p. 299). Isaac has offered the Negro the consolation that the Negro will endure, and the blind faith that the wrong will be righted if one does nothing long enough.

Yet this defeatism is not the true measure of Isaac McCaslin; it is but the partial response of an embattled and struggling spirit. Isaac, like the story itself, is torn in two by opposing forces. One force moves him to atone for the sin against the Negro; the other pushes him toward escape from the Southern dilemma. To atone for the sin, he repudiated the land; but this proved to be only a lonely gesture of the conscience that did not touch the hard face of the world. To escape the dilemma he sought refuge in the wilderness, where "he would be able to hide himself" (p. 318). Like its protagonist, "The Bear" both retreats from and confronts life. When it retreats from the Southern situation, it tells beautifully and mystically of the hunt and the wilderness, as though chanting an elegy for the passing of a golden age. When the story confronts the Southern dilemma, it loses focus and disintegrates. This is most apparent in the fourth section of the story, which rambles from Isaac's discursive introversions to the ledger entries to various uncorrelated episodes and finally to the intrusive opinions of the author about the relative merits of the South and the North. Both the protagonist and the author seem to be battling with themselves—not in the manner of the author of *Absalom, Absalom!* or *The Sound and the Fury* with its fine controlled tension, but in the manner of one who is being fragmentized by unbearable guilt. It is not just the South's obsessional guilt about the Negro, but it is the guilt implicit in a public admission of sin—a treasonable act for a Southerner.

By shifting the story's focus from the Negro to the wilderness, Faulkner is shifting the burden of guilt from the South to mankind. It is mankind that, driven by rapacity, has destroyed God's wilderness and enslaved His black creatures. Although the exploitation of nature is not morally the same as the enslavement of one's fellow man, Faulkner has chosen to merge these two crimes, as if to blur their moral distinctions. By fashioning a primitivistic mystique, with Christian overtones, based on God's will and the concept of the virgin wilderness as the golden age, Faulkner has endeavored to bulwark Isaac's conscience against the inroads of guilt. But this mystique is shot through with contradictions and weakness. On one hand, Faulkner has identified the wilderness with peace, brotherhood, pity, and humility; on the other hand, he has identified it with the primitive hunt that epitomizes "the will and desire to pursue and kill" (p. 237). Although the wilderness serves Isaac, as the seminary served Gail Hightower, as the temple of God, it serves also as a refuge from the world.

But there is no refuge from "the old wrong and shame" (p. 351). This is made apparent in the last two stories of the volume, "Delta Autumn" and "Go Down, Moses." Half a century has passed; the year is 1940 now. Time was running out for both Isaac and the wilderness. The diminishing wilderness had retreated toward the Delta; it had been replaced by the plumb-ruled highways, the tremendous gins, and the "ruthless mile-wide parallelograms" (p. 342) "of rank cotton for the frantic old-world people to turn into shells to shoot at one another" (p. 354). Although Uncle Ike saw the advancing destruction of the woods, he seemed sustained by a benign peace, a peace bought by his repudiation of the land. Uncle Ike's gentle, Christlike peace[5] is set against signs of vague unrest and ill omen: the remote European war; the faint light and dying warmth of the tent under the constant murmuring of the rain; the sullen brooding and harsh remarks of his kinsman and present owner of the McCaslin land, Roth Edmonds; and Will Legate's taunts about Roth's hunting of does.

The next morning Uncle Ike saw the doe. The doe was a young woman who had come in search of Roth. She was the mulatto granddaughter of Tennie's Jim, Old Carothers' Negro grandson. Unwittingly Roth Edmonds had committed miscegenation compounded by incest, his ancestor's sin. To this woman, his own black kin, Uncle Ike cried "in that thin not loud and grieving voice: 'Get out of here! I can do nothing for you! Can't nobody do nothing for you!' " (p. 361). His child's peace

[5] Throughout the story, "Delta Autumn," Uncle Ike is frequently (eight times) described as peaceful and untroubled. Three times he is described with his hands crossed over his breast, three times compared to a gentle child.

had been shattered. With quiet candor the mulatto woman reminded the shaking old man of a truth older than peace: " 'Have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you don't remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?' " (p. 363). He was left with the wafting light and "grieving rain" (p. 365) and his shivering body and panting breath.

No Southerner can purchase immunity. Even for an Uncle Ike there is no peace in our time. The "old wrong and shame" has not been erased, but crops up anew in different guises. Now it is the South's honor and code that deny a woman's love; now it is the North's law that executes a Negro murderer for an aborted rebellion against the white society which has rejected him—the subject of the story "Go Down, Moses." The old Negress, Aunt Mollie, is ultimately right in her lament that Roth Edmonds sold her Benjamin to Pharaoh. The execution of Butch Beauchamp began long ago with the enslavement of the Negro by the Carothers McCaslins. Now, in the twentieth century, there is still no Moses, Faulkner says, to lead the Negro out of bondage.

Go Down, Moses voices the concern of conscience over the Negro's plight in a white man's world, yet it voices too the grief of conscience over its own helplessness. The South that denies the Negro his manhood denies the white man his right to love. The power of love cannot break through the world's hard shell. Isaac McCaslin's lonely act of atonement leaves no perceptible mark upon the Southern system. As the wilderness of the old Mississippi gives way to the fields of "rank cotton for the frantic old-world people to turn into shells to shoot at one another," it becomes apparent that the evil of the old world persists in the new. There is no peace. There is only the anguish of an old man to testify to the presence of the human conscience.

Bibliography

THE BIBLIOGRAPHY that follows is selective. By and large, it contains titles of additional readings on literature usually anthologized and on key novels. The student can find material on other writers and works by consulting the books listed under "General." Clearly, there are many good articles and books not listed here; we thought it necessary to limit the list and yet maintain a spread of entries.

The student should note that books mentioned under "General" are not listed again under individual authors, although they may contain sections on these authors. In the "General" listing some indication of content is given in brackets, and as the student uses the later lists to pursue his study of a particular author, he should not forget these earlier entries under "General." We also recommend that he read more in the books from which we have reprinted chapters; these book titles are given as part of the first footnote on the first page of each essay we reprint.

If his library is limited, the student might remember that reprinting articles is customary now—that many essays in journals appear in collections, and that often scholars allow chapters from their books to appear as articles in journals. Our advice, then, is to use some ingenuity in looking for particular titles—to search sometimes for the same article in journals, general studies, and collections.

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